Our Youth.

A PAPER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR TEACHERS. PUBLISHED EVERY WEEK.

J. H. Vincent, Editor. [Vol. I.] NEW YORK, DECEMBER 19, 1885. [No. 3.] Phillips & Hunt, Publishers.

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began:
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

—John Milton.

REX RANSOM'S CRUISE TO FAR CATHAY.

A Serial Story.

BY AN OFFICER IN THE U. S. NAVY.

CHAPTER III.

GETTING SETTLED.

WHEN Rex joined the *Scranton*, it was expected that she would start on her cruise in a day or two at the farthest; but fresh occasions for delay kept rising which detained her for a week at her moorings. During this time Rex got a clearer insight into the life that lay before him. He made, also, some new friends and tasted some fresh experiences.

Among his messmates was a lad of about the same age as himself, but not more than half his weight. He was slight-built and thin, but nervous and wiry, pert of speech, and bold of manner. His name was Jack Reddy. In his early days he had been a *gamin* in the streets of New York. He had been rescued by a kind friend and had passed two years of his life under wholesome influences, but the brand of the Ishmaelite was upon him. He "knew life," and though not positively vicious, had the manners of one to whom nothing was new, and whom no depravity could shock.

He somewhat astonished Rex on the occasion of the latter's second breakfast on board. The question had been raised as to what had become of Jacobs, one of the quartermasters, who had gone ashore the day before on liberty.

"Down in the brig," said Reddy, busy with his knife and fork, and not stopping to look up. "Cum off in the mid-watch a-roaring, and has got a head on him this morning like a pisened pup!"

"That's an old trick o' his'n," said Norris, setting down his coffee-bowl. "I've sailed with him afore. He's a-gettin' too old for that sort o' thing. He'll git brought up with a round turn one o' these days."

"He will not get a chance again very soon," said Andersen, in his slow fashion. He will be put into Class 4 and be quarantined three months. I saw him an hour ago, and he was very sorry and ashamed."

"Yes," struck in Reddy, "he's singin' a duet just now with his friend, Mr. R. E. Morse"

"The chaplain ought to get him to join the Temperance League," said Andersen; "it's just the time to catch him."

"No use tryin' to save him," said Reddy, coolly, as he rose from the table to light his pipe at the smoking lantern; "he's goin' to hell cross-lots—he can't stop to go by the highway."

Reddy was one of the signal-men, and stood his regular watch on the poop-deck. The flag-ship of the home squadron came in one day, and dropped anchor near the *Scranton*. From that time the signal-men were kept busy, either bending on "numbers" (combinations of different-colored bunting) for yard-arm signals, or hoisting the "answering pennant," or transmitting questions or answers by wig-wag (waving a flag). Rex was deeply interested in watching the bright colors—so full of mystery as to their meaning—run up; but he could not understand a habit which Reddy had of stepping backward a few steps as he held the signal halliards in his hand, and looked toward the flag-ship for reply. So, as he helped him on one occasion to unbend the "numbers," he ventured to ask him why he walked backward when signaling. Reddy hadn't the slightest reason for his peculiarity, probably was not conscious of it; but he always had an answer. He stopped only long enough to jet a mouthful of tobacco juice into a handy spit-kid, and scratch his nose before he replied,

"Well, I dunno—unless it is because I ate so many deviled crabs last week."

Rex had to pay the usual penalty for "greenness." Frequent attempts were made to play tricks on him during his first week on board, and some of them were successful—very much to his annoyance, for no boy likes to be imposed upon.

One night, while he was asleep, another boy stole quietly from his hammock to the ship's writer's desk, dipped a camel's-hair brush in ink, and, returning, painted two small rings on Rex's right cheek. Others were in the secret, and when Rex awoke they all professed to be concerned about his "ringworms," and advised him not to wash his face until he had seen the surgeon. Rex looked in his little hand-glass and was quite dismayed at the unusual appearances on his cheek. When the "sick call" was sounded at 9 o'clock, he was among the first to "lay down" to the sick bay, from which, however, he was somewhat impatiently ejected by the surgeon, who told him to go and soap his face and not come trying any "dodges" in the hope of "getting on the list." As he came up to the deck there was quite a shout of derisive laughter from the knowing ones. Rex held his tongue, but had he known at that moment who it was who had "put up that job" on him, there would have been "either a fight or a foot-race."

Later on, on the same day, a petty officer whom he did not know, but whom he met between decks, told him to go to the captain of the hold, and borrow for him "a spanner for a top-sail tye." Rex did not know what the article was, but he hurried away to the hold and asked for it. The captain of the hold put on a queer smile, and told Rex that the captain of the forecastle had borrowed his, but he "guessed as how" he was through with it now. Rex sped away to the captain of the forecastle, who was very sorry, but the boatswain's mate of the gun-deck had come to him a short time ago in a great hurry for it, and he had let it go. Rex, afraid that the petty officer who had first sent him would be angry at his long delay, hunted up the boatswain's mate, and asked him impatiently to let him have "the spanner for the top-sail tye."

"O—yes! I—must have laid it down in the fore passage; ask the yeoman for it!"

The yeoman, however, was nowhere to be found; and when Rex returned, heated and breathless, to find the petty officer who had sent him on his fruitless errand, he, too, had disappeared. Then the suspicion came to him that he had been made the victim of imposition. On inquiry he learned that there was no such thing as "a spanner for a top-sail tye;" that though it sounded nautical, the expression was utterly meaningless.

Quite provoked at this new trick, Rex determined that he would not be "taken in" again. But this decision came near involving him in serious difficulty. On the afternoon of the next day, a boatswain's mate told him to go down to the berth-deck and see if the jackasses were in the manger. Convinced that this was a new trial of his verdancy, and remembering that this petty officer was one of those who had imposed upon him the day before, Rex flatly declined to go, and walked away. The boatswain's mate hastened after him and angrily repeated his order. Rex paid him no attention whatever. He was congratulating himself on his firmness in meeting this phase of annoyance when, to his great astonishment, the master-at-arms took him by the arms and led him "to the mast." There he found the boatswain's mate, still very angry, the officer of the deck, and the executive officer.

"State your case," said the latter to the petty officer.

The petty officer did so—to the effect that he had twice given an order to the boy Ransom, and that he had on both occasions refused to obey. He stated what the order was.

"What have you to say?" said the executive officer, fixing his eyes sternly on the boy.

But he was surprised at the pair of eyes that were turned steadily upon him. They were bewildered, but honest—the officer could read that at a glance.

"I am afraid, sir, I have made a mistake," said Rex. "I didn't want to be imposed upon. I haven't been long on the ship, and I didn't suppose it was like a barn, sir, with jackasses and a manger."

At this a quick gleam passed over the officer's face, but he said nothing.

Rex then told him of some of the tricks which had been played upon him, and accused his accuser of having taken part in the matter of "the spanner for the top-sail tye."

"You may dismiss the case," said the executive officer to the officer of the deck. Then, turning to the boatswain's mate, he said,

"Furlong, you will take the boy Ransom to the berth-deck, and try to convince him that, whether a ship is like a barn or not, we have jackasses and a manger. And," he added, significantly, "if you expect to have your authority as a petty officer on board this ship respected, don't trifle with it yourself."

The two went down to the berth-deck in silence, and Furlong, pointing to two conical-shaped canvas bags stuffed with oakum, used for plugging the hawse-pipes at sea, said,

"There, you young rapscallion, them's jackasses, do you see? And this here place," pointing to the part of the deck beneath the hawse-pipes, slightly railed off, "is the manger. And when I send yer again on an errand, mind yer go, if you know what's good for yerself."

"I certainly will," said Rex, mildly; and, as the man turned away, he hastened after him and said, impetuously, "I really beg your pardon! I didn't know, you see. I really thought you meant to fool me."

But the petty officer was too grouty to listen to apologies, and hastened up the ladder.

Rex, however, soon found more serious occasions of annoyance than practical jokes—the coarseness and chaffing at the mess-table. For the first day or two these were kept somewhat in check, but his messmates were not disposed to "clap a stopper" on their jaws because a green country lad had joined them. To the frank brutality of manners which characterizes too often the messes of a man-of-war, that to which Rex belonged formed no exception. He was forced to listen to allusions which brought the blush to his cheek, and sometimes sent a shudder all over him. Carrying with him in his heart of hearts the memory of a saintly mother, and the image of his pure, high-minded cousin, the vileness of much of what he heard jarred painfully. Nor was obscenity all. The irreverence and godlessness of the common speech shocked him. Nothing was sacred. The holiest of beings and the holiest of truths were openly profaned and sneered at. Religion was derided. Good men were "blarsted hypocrites." Sailors who went to church were "after a soft billet," or "trying to come it over the chaplain." Not all the mess, of course, talked in this way—only three or four; but these were so positive in their wickedness and so vociferative that the rest generally held their peace.

Rex discussed this annoyance with Andersen. The latter admitted that they were "a bad lot"—"beasts and devils," he called them—but advised Rex to shut his ears as much as possible. He gave him to understand that much of this talk was aimed at him, to provoke or shock him into saying something; and that, if he would simply hold his tongue and pay no attention to it, the leaders would get tired after a while. He followed this advice, but the revolt of his nature against the vulgarity thrust upon him was such that he felt like trying to thresh these "sons of Belial" into either decency or silence.

He took the earliest opportunity of "showing his colors," by joining the Temperance League and attending religious services. The former was held on alternate Tuesday evenings on the port side of the gun-deck. The exercises consisted of singing, prayer, an address by the chaplain, or some visitor, and an invitation to join the society by signing the constitution. About fifty of the crew were present. Rex was very much interested. He was among the first to respond to the call, at the close of the meeting, for new members. It required no sacrifice on his part to take the pledge. In his sheltered life thus far he had never known temptation.

The religious meeting on Thursday night was devoted largely to the singing of "Moody and Sankey" hymns, led by music on a reed organ played by one of the sailors. Rex had a good clear voice, and was familiar with most of the tunes. It seemed a queer place in which to invoke the Prince of Peace, on that deck built for war. The massive guns, with rammers and sponges triced up above them, the gleaming cutlasses and rifles and revolvers arranged in racks on the ship's side, were strange furniture for a "house of prayer." Rex could not help recalling, with a choking sensation in his throat, the quiet home-parlor where he had been wont to sing these well-remembered hymns, and the loved voice that was silent on earth forever. It was a relief to him when, midway in the service, the chaplain rose, opened his Bible, read a few verses, and gave an earnest talk for about fifteen minutes, so practical and intelligible that all could understand it, so pointed and sympathetic as to stir the consciences of those present. He then knelt and offered a brief prayer which sounded like an outpouring of his heart in strong desire that none might neglect, that all might seek, the great salvation.

After the meeting the chaplain spoke to Rex. He could not say much to him because of the confusion. The boatswain's mate had yelled out the usual order, "Lay aft there, you after-guard of mizzen-topmen, and unrig church!" and the men were busy clearing away the benches. So he invited Rex to come to his room in a few moments. The lad waited about five minutes, and then tremblingly entered the ward-room.

It was brilliantly lighted. The officers, some in groups, some singly, were reading, or playing cards, or talking somewhat boisterously over a bottle of wine. Rex hesitated. He felt somehow as though he had no business there, as though he was an intruder. He felt inclined to retreat. But the paymaster noticed him, asked him kindly whom he wished to see, and pointed out the room. Rex knocked on the bulkhead. The *portiere* was drawn aside, and the chaplain gave him a frank welcome.

"Sit down!" he said, pointing to the only chair, and himself jumping up backward and sitting on his bunk.

The youth sat down, giving a curious glance as he did so around the little room. The chaplain noticed it.

"This is your first visit to the officers' quarters?" he inquired.

Rex said that he had looked in, but had never been in before.

The chaplain then showed him his bureau, the top of which was covered with books, papers, and photographs, and the upper drawer of which, on being pulled out, let down and revealed a desk with pigeon-holes and writing apparatus. There was a looking-glass over the bureau, and an adjustable arrangement for the electric light, by which it could be turned at any angle, and raised or lowered at pleasure. High up on either bulkhead were black-walnut cases for books. Fore and aft, along the side of the ship, was the bunk, or bed, covered with a white counterpane, with a lace sham over the pillows, and a handsome scarlet afghan rolled up at the foot—the latter the work of his daughter, the chaplain said. Over the bunk were lockers, and under it were drawers. A neat toilet apparatus, of copper tank for water, a set bowl, a fancifully-painted jar and foot-bath, occupied the corner on the left, on entering. A heavy rug covered the linoleum on the floor. Various little conveniences and ornaments were put up on the bulkheads—a rack for toilet articles, a cane and umbrella bag, a pretty clock on a bracket, a brush case, a Ruskin and roll calendar, and a large oak-framed photograph of the Mater Dolorosa. Christmas and New-Year cards were tacked in at the sides of the looking-glass. There was a Narragansett Exercising Apparatus fastened to the bulkhead between the wash-bowl and the head of the bunk. The room was not large—not more than seven feet square—but the space was so well economized that it gave the impression of being much larger.

The chaplain found no difficulty in drawing out from the lad the particulars of his previous life. The latter talked with a freedom which surprised him when he thought of it afterward. But he was put so completely at his ease, and there was something in the face and tones of the chaplain which so won his confidence, that he could not help laying bare his very heart. He told of his early craving for sea life, the sad domestic history which had made him free to indulge it, his enthusiasm for the service, his delight in coming to the ship, his lack of experience, his desire to learn, his worries, and hopes, and fears. And as the chaplain listened, only putting in a question now and then, and watched the lad's beaming face and sincere eyes, he was convinced that he had before him a very exceptional specimen—a lad with a conscience; a lad with a worthy purpose and pure impulses; a lad who might and ought to develop into a noble manhood.

A shade of sadness covered his face as he reflected upon the influences to which his young friend—for he so considered him—would be exposed.

"Who did you say your father was?" he asked, after a while.

"My father was a Congregational minister—Rev. Reuben Ransom," Rex replied.

The chaplain looked up with surprise.

"I knew him well by reputation," he said. "He died some time ago."

"Yes," said Rex, "ten years ago last July. I was only six years old then."

"Well, Ransom," said the chaplain, "you had a noble father, and I am glad you form an exception to the current maxim about ministers' sons."

A bright color came to the lad's face. "If I do, I owe it all to my mother," he said, quickly.

The tap of the drum on the spar-deck "beating the call" warned Rex that tattoo would be sounded in a few moments, and that he must take his leave.

As he rose, the chaplain took him kindly by the hand and said,

"I have greatly enjoyed your call. You must come and see me again very soon."

Rex promised thankfully that he would. The chaplain had still a parting word to say:

"Be on your guard, my dear boy! You have come into a bad atmosphere. Ship life is a severe test of a lad's principles. Men herded together, as they are here, always demoralize one another. You must have come in contact already with what I mean. And there is no escape from it. You cannot get away. You must live in it. In this respect you would be better off morally if you were in a penitentiary, for there you would have a cell to yourself at night, and opportunity to be alone and think; but you can have no privacy here, unless you are keeping a masthead lookout. Therefore, watch and pray!" He repeated the admonition solemnly, "Watch and pray! Keep yourself unspotted from the world!"

Rex thanked him with a swelling heart, and hastened up to the deck. He had scarcely time to undress and swing himself into his hammock before the nine o'clock gun was fired, and the order given for "silence fore and aft."

[*To be continued.*]

AN ARCTIC CHRISTMAS.

BY FREDERICK SCHWATKA.

Of course to have a Christmas anywhere, even in the dreary winter night of the frigid zones, there must be people believing in the celebration of that day distinctly as Christmas. The poor stolid Esquimau can no more celebrate Christmas in its truest sense by feasts and gifts than we can the Chinese New Year by exploding a few fire-crackers on that day. So we must have people from Christmas-land to celebrate Christmas. But do any white people from civilization ever visit the Polar zones, beyond a few straggling explorers, here and there, now and then; and of these we read accounts in their books, and how nearly they reproduce the Christmas dinners and festivities of their far-away homes. We have such people in the whalers, who visit that dreary country to search for the great arctic whale, that stays only in the icy waters of the north. Oftentimes they remain away two years, and thus they spend a winter, and consequently a Christmas, in Arctic-land.

Near my camp in north Hudson's Bay were four whaling vessels in winter harbor, and here I shall take my readers for an arctic Christmas. Two *igloos* (snow-houses) down the coast—for so the Esquimau reckons his journeys—brings us to them, their great masts standing high in the air, and cross yards looking like dead trees in a winter scene. We have been living for nearly three months in a snow-house, where the temperature must be below freezing, or the roof and sides of our house would melt down and tumble in on top of us; so when we enter the warm ships, heated by coal stoves, and as warm as our houses in civilization, we feel the change disagreeably for two or three days before we get real used to it, and our appetite returns in time for the Christmas dinner. It is not far off to Christmas time, a few days, and we curiously examine the preparations for it in a land where every thing must change in all the particulars, however much the sentiment may remain the same. Where was the Christmas-tree to come from, and what would be put on it? They simply took the clothes off the clothes-line in the "house" of the largest vessel, and this served as a tree. This "house" is a temporary affair built over the ship, after she goes into winter harbor, and extends nearly the whole length of the ship. Gifts, of course, are such simple things as they think the recipient will most like, a pipe or a bag of tobacco, a jack-knife, or possibly a bag of doughnuts from the cook, and a dozen other simple things, but greatly appreciated in that dreary land. Some fellow borrows a suit of clothes from the Esquimau village near by, and personifies Santa Claus in a truly typical way as from the boreal regions. The dinner comprises such unheard-of things as

reindeer steak smothered in canned onions, seal and musk-ox sausage-balls, pickled whales' skin, stewed walrus flipper, besides the usual canned things from home, rounded off by the ever-present sailor's plum-duff. And the poor Esquimaux who have furnished all the material for these quaint and curious dishes are not forgotten, but they are each given a great quart-cup full of steaming hot coffee, a dozen "hard-tack," as sailors call their hard round crackers, and all the molasses they can put in their coffee and smear over their crackers, and with this they forego their seal, walrus, reindeer, and polar bear meat for once, and enjoy themselves to their hearts' content. In the evening an amateur theatrical troupe from the best singers and musical performers of the four ships give us an original play, titled "The Happy Hyperborean Heart; or, The Boreal Bride of British America," interspersed with jolly songs and performances on a half-dozen instruments, and by twelve o'clock midnight "all hands" have spent a much happier Christmas than many a poor wretch at home.

OLD CHRISTMAS.

BY ANNA F. BURNHAM.

Old Christmas comes
With frozen thumbs,
  His long beard white with snow;
'Tis right good cheer
His knock to hear,
  And grief to have him go.

His round old face
Has a ruddy grace,
  And he wears a cheerful grin;
And a merry snatch
He trolls at the latch,
  For he knows we'll let him in.

Old hearts grow young
With his merry tongue—
  Both heart and purse are wide;
The hungry poor
Find open door
  At the happy Christmas tide.

The children dance,
And the babies prance,
  For the tiniest toddler knows
'Tis a world of drums
And dolls and plums,
  Where the jolly old pilgrim goes.

CHRISTMAS NUTS.

BY ROSE TERRY COOKE.

"O-o!"

It was a long-drawn sigh, so full of pain and weariness that even the young doctor, who was going his rounds in the hospital that morning, and was conversant with every tone of human distress, looked over his shoulder at the cot that stood behind him, which he had not yet inspected. There lay, uplifted well on pillows, a man who might be twenty-five or seventy-five years old, so utterly had wasting disease transformed his features; there certainly was no aspect of youth in the hollow cheek, the parched lips, the deadly pallor of the countenance, or the great sunken eyes that looked out on life with such hopeless languor.

"Well, my good man," said the brisk little doctor, "what's the matter with you?"

"Nothing," answered the sick man, apathetically.

"Nothing! Well, well, that's good; quite ready to leave us, eh?"

The doctor was a Connecticut Yankee; his tones and accent were the shibboleth that betrayed him. But O, with what sweetness did they fall on this patient's ear! for they brought back to him his home, his childhood, his kindred, and his friends. He seemed to see the small red house on the hill-side, where all his boyhood was passed; to smell the "laylock" bushes that waved their purple plumes beside the door; to hear his father calling the cows from that green pasture across the tiny brook; to be once more beside his mother in the fire-lit kitchen. Tears filled his eyes, and his dry lips quivered; he could not answer the doctor. But in due time that acute little man got at Watson Lea's story, and it was sad enough. He was the youngest of five brothers, three of whom had gone to the war of the rebellion, and returned no more—two shot in battle, one dying of fever; the fourth had stayed at home to take care of his parents and this younger child, but had met his fate there, falling from a ladder in the barn and dying instantly. Then followed father and mother; and Watson was alone at fifteen, with only the small farm to support him. That was sold, and the proceeds devoted to his education. He had that love of teaching which makes a good teacher, and when he was twenty-six found himself at the head of a great public school in the inland city of Harper, earning a salary more than sufficient for his needs, and having also earned the respect and affection of almost every pupil under his care.

Old as he looked to-day, he was only thirty. He had invested the little money laid up in the past four years in a manner that seemed, to his inexperience, perfectly safe and yielding high interest. But suddenly these stocks began to depreciate, and at the beginning of the summer vacation he had come to New York to see about them, and found them to be worthless beyond hope. It was a real blow to Watson Lea, for he had long desired to repurchase the old farm, and have a home of his own to enjoy in his old age. But he was young, and not given to despairing, so long as his health and strength endured; so when he found out that his money investment had failed he did not sit down and bemoan the loss, but resolved to stay a week in New York and acquaint himself with many things it would be pleasant to inspect and useful to know. He found a place to stay at a cheap boarding-house, and one of his first expeditions was made to the docks, where he wandered among the unloading cargoes of foreign ships; and, being courteous by nature, found ways and means of entering and exploring vessels of many a nation, just in from perils by sea and bearing marks of foul weather and furious winds. Then he made his way to the great charities and reformatories of the mighty city; and after that to its libraries, its picture galleries, its collections of scientific objects, its work-shops, and its parks. No wonder that when the week was up he felt tired and listless, and determined to stay a few days longer and rest. But he did not rest. The fourth night after his week of work was over, he was heard by the lodger in the next room raving wildly, and the master of the house was called at once and the nearest doctor sent for, who ordered him off to a hospital, since there was no clew to his relatives or friends to be found about him, and only "W. Lea" stood for his name on the valise that held his clothing. He had no letters with him, nor had he made any acquaintance in the house, or given any information about his place of residence or his occupation. His bill had been paid in advance, and the money found in his pocket was given over to the authorities of the hospital.

His fever proved to be a case of ship typhus, and for three months he lay at death's door in B—— Hospital. "An interesting case," the doctors said, for it was a fight between death and life, and to these repairers of humanity as exciting as a yacht race or a base-ball match to common people; and when at last the vitality of a strong constitution and a pure life triumphed, the victory was, after all, the worst kind of defeat to the patient.

In the meantime nobody in Harper knew what had become of Mr. Lea; no letters came from him as to any change

or improvement in the school-house or its apparatus, though in every other long vacation some among the school committee had grumbled at his demands, for he was a teacher who believed in teaching with every adjunct of aid and illustration, and said often that a teacher needed tools as much as a gardener or a carpenter. The good woman with whom he had always boarded put his two rooms in perfect order, scrubbed, swept, dusted, repapered the sitting-room, and scoured the brasses of his Franklin stove till they shone again, tacked a fresh serim comfortable for his bed, and recovered his wood-box with green drugget, but the occupant did not appear. The West Middle School-house, a fine brick building, with towers and granite steps, mullioned windows, oak desks, and "every modern improvement," as the local papers phrased it, had been cleaned till it smelt as new as the first year of its usage, but the principal was not seen or heard of. It was known that he had gone to New York on business, but no one knew on what business, as he had been a little mortified about his unsuccessful investment, and had not told of it to his best friends. Term time came, but no principal; he was expected up to the last moment, and then Miss Maddox, the teacher of the next highest classes, was put in as a *locum tenens* till Mr. Lea should arrive, or another principal be engaged.

The school committee, urged by two of their number, who were personal friends of Mr. Lea, at last advertised in New York papers for the missing man, but received no information about him. The card on his valise had been written hurriedly, and the L, mistaken for an S, when strangers read it; he had been taken to the hospital as W. Sea, and the porter had joked about his name, and said he must belong to the Marine Hospital.

He had dropped out of his past life as a feather drops into the wave, floats a moment, and is engulfed by the trackless and inhospitable ocean. So another principal was put in his place, greatly to the disgust of the old scholars and the regret of the teachers; but things adjusted themselves after a while, and had been running on smooth wheels for two months, when on that bitter November day little Dr. Tinker heard Watson Lea sigh and began to interest himself in the slowly-recovering sick man.

It was long before Mr. Lea was able to sit up and tell the doctor any thing but the bald outlines of his story, and the doctor kept him in the hospital just as long as he could coax the authorities in power to let him remain. One attempt to remove him was followed by a severe relapse, from which he crept up still more slowly than from the fever, so that the snowing and blowing of a wild December set in before he could be certified as a convalescent, and even then he was so feeble, so helpless, so friendless, that Dr. Tinker could hardly call it a misfortune when, on leaving the hospital, he slipped on its icy step and broke his left arm. This was a surgical case, and he was taken back to another ward, feeling scarcely grieved himself at the injury which insured him a place of refuge till he should be a little stronger.

Here he found a worse case than his own, an elderly man with both an arm and a leg broken from falling just in front of a cart-wheel two weeks before. He was a farmer from the country, whose land had been ruined the autumn before by a terrible freshet, and who had hoped to find his brother in New York, and get some work there to support his wife and himself. But his brother had long left the city, and, worse still, left no clew to his destination; he had been an irresponsible, wandering fellow always, and it had been a forlorn hope that sent Daniel Turner to look him up.

"You've had harder luck than I have," said Watson Lea, as he sat down by the old man's cot, impelled to speak to him by the kindly face that showed such a placid front to misfortune.

"'Tisn't luck," said Daniel Turner, with a smile. "I've lived long enough, friend, to know that the will of God isn't luck."

Mr. Lea's face grew troubled; he had, in his distress, forgotten God himself.

"I know it does seem hard," went on the old man; "but we're limited creeturs; we can't see into the deep designs of the Lord. But I've lived quite a spell of years and I've laid this by that, a lookin' back, and I can say honest that I haven't never seen the Lord's ways come out any thing but even and square."

Mr. Lea looked at him wistfully.

"It's hard for young folks to see it, I know," Turner went on, "but it's true as truth. 'I have been young, and now am old,' Scripter says—and I'm sixty odd year, friend—'yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread;' that's so, I set my hand to 't."

"And yet here you are, alone in a hospital, with a long lookout of pain and feebleness before you."

"That's so; but it'll come out right, for the Lord's behind it. It's the pillar of cloud that's leadin' of me now, when I look at it with mortal eyes, just the light of this one world; but to see it as all them worlds of stars and the heavens declarin' his glory see it, it's a pillar o' fire, friend, for 'tis the hand of the Life that is the Light of men."

"I wish I could see it so," said Mr. Lea.

"Mabbe you will, mabbe you will," said the old man, closing his eyes, tired of talking, Lea thought, as he moved away. But really those eyes closed in the reverence of an earnest prayer for the fellow-sufferer who was spiritually blind.

Yet Watson Lea had thought and professed himself to be a Christian. It was because the springing blade is not strong enough to abide hail and whirlwind that his faith failed him now. It would spring up again and grow into the full corn in the ear after a while, perhaps—yes, certainly—the stronger for its early experience of defeat and hardness.

Next day the old man began the conversation himself.

"Friend," he said, "will you do me a little favor?"

"I'd do you a big one if I could," answered Mr. Lea, with the first smile that had lighted his face for many a day.

"Well, it's the small one I want, so you can do it. Mabbe when the great need comes the great ability for to do it will come too. I want you to set down and write to my wife, Mrs. Dan'el Turner, Weldon Falls, *Ver*mont, an' tell her just how and where I be; will ye?"

"If you say so, I will; but don't you want her to come to you?"

A sharp quiver of pain crossed the tired old face.

"She can't come if I do, friend; she hasn't got the means, nor I haven't."

"Then why do you tell her you're hurt?"

"Well, that's just what I've been a-ponderin' on a-layin' here; I was some shook up in my head when they fetched me here, and then when I began to think, why, I felt so myself, just as you say. I'd jest put a letter into the post-office to her when I was hurt—that's where I had been—and I thought she'd worry some—it's natural to women folks *to* worry—and it would do jest as well to wait a spell. But I think I done wrong; when things happen, why they happen at the Lord's time, and that's the time for folks to know of 'em, appears to me. 'Tis like daily bread, comes daily; whether it's good, or bad, or middlin', it's for that day, not for to-morrer, nor the next day; and I want Sary to know, the same as I'd want to know, immediate, if she got hurt."

Watson Lea wrote the letter, and by the same mail that took it to that neat little white house in a nook among the Vermont mountains there went another letter which Dr. Tinker had, after much doubt, thought best to write to the post-master at Harper.

The last day of the second week in December, the chairman of the School Committee of the West Middle School stepped up on the principal's platform just as that gentleman was about to dismiss the assembled scholars, and said,

"I want to speak a few words to the school, if you please, sir!"

The principal looked a little surprised, but bowed, and said,

"Certainly."

Mr. Williams began:

"A great many of you boys and girls knew and loved Mr. Lea, who was the head of this school for the last four years; and you, with all his friends, have been grieved and distressed at his strange disappearance. Well, we have found him—" (Here an irrepressible shout interrupted him. Mr. Williams wiped his eyes, and the principal rung his bell once, which meant silence.)

"Yes, we have found him; you'll see all about it in the papers to-morrow, so I wont explain now. I only want to tell you that Mr. Lea is now in B—— Hospital, New York, with a broken arm and not a cent of money. Now, I thought some of you would like to send him a Christmas present; it would please him, as it does all of us, to be remembered, and you might help him some, too. But I want you to get together and do it yourselves; there isn't much time, but if you do it all, without asking other people, I think he'd like it better. Will you?"

There was a shout of assent this time that the principal did not silence, and as soon as school was dismissed the boys and girls who had known Mr. Lea gathered in knots in the yard, and buzzed like swarming bees.

"Some of us will pitch in too," said Mr. Williams to the principal, quite forgetting that he used slang; "but Lea was always a very independent fellow, and I know it would come easier for him to take help from the children than from us."

The principal thought so too.

After much talking and many plans, the boys at last held a formal meeting, to which the girls were invited, and appointed a committee to meet the next day and report, after taking advice with Mr. Williams and the minister, what was best to send Mr. Lea, and how to send it. So the next day, which was Saturday, the committee reported that as they did not understand Mr. Lea's immediate needs, the best thing to send him was money, and to that end they proposed that every one of the meeting should send their former teacher the money they had laid up for Christmas presents in their own families, provided those families consented, and bring it to Simeon Smith, Chairman of the Committee, next Monday night.

Of course, girls and boys who had made presents for their friends wouldn't have as much to give as those who meant to buy them. But they did not mean to have any body know what individuals should give; each was to drop his or her contribution into one of the church boxes, borrowed for that purpose.

As to the ways and means of presenting this money to Mr. Lea, the chairman remarked that it was necessary to send it in such a way that it should not fall into the hands of the hospital people. Simeon had read some dime novels, I am sorry to say, and had thereby attained to a deep distrust of city people in general, and benevolent institutions in particular. So he had brooded over and at last concocted a plan of such surprising wisdom that it was received by the meeting with great applause and some laughter; while Mr. Williams, to whom he went for help in carrying out his intention next day, fairly roared with amusement, though he did not discourage it. But as Simeon requested the crowd of sixty boys and girls not to mention the thing at all, we will, for a short time, keep his secret too, and go back to B—— Hospital.

The morning of Christmas day set in with a heavy snow-storm that made even the decorated ward seem dreary to Watson Lea as he sat beside his cot and thought of past anniversaries like this, passed at the cheerful firesides of friends where he was a welcome guest. It is true that kindly hands had adorned the hospital whenever it could be done with garlands and bunches of evergreen, and that a bright wood-fire burned on the grate of the surgical ward, set there for the sake of ventilation, but to-day turned to uses of cheer and warmth. Yet such was the lonely young fellow's despondence that these very adornings made him sadder still. The luxuriant trails of ground-pine that wreathed doors and windows brought back to him the hill-side back of his father's house, mantled with that same verdant vine, where he had lain many an hour in the hot October sunshine, and watched the chestnuts slowly detach themselves from the satin-lined burs, and rattle sharply on the dry leaves below; a sound the squirrel heard too, and hastened to contest with him their winter's providing of food. And those masses of glittering laurel leaves! How often had he wandered up past the hill-pasture in June to the high wood-lot, where nothing but a squirrel or a boy could find a way among the bare crooked stems that were crowned above that same shining darkness of foliage with profuse clusters of rosy or snowy bloom, as if some dawn-lit cloud had descended to lie upon the hills and make them glorious! From this dream of his lost home he was roused by the voice of Daniel Turner, who had to-day, for the first time, been lifted to a lighter cot and wheeled toward the fire.

"Pleasant, isn't it, friend? Makes me think of winter-time to home, when we used to play round snowy days and fetch our bags of hick'ry nuts to the kitchen fire to crack 'em even-in's. I do like to see the snow come down to purpose, 'twill throw a mantle o' charity, as you may say, acrost this big dirty city, and make it white for a spell, any way. 'White as no fuller on earth can white them.' But the whitenin' Scripter tells about will last; yes, forever 'nd ever; that's good."

"Our people never kept Christmas when I was a boy," said Watson Lea, by way of conversation.

"No more did our'n; but I like the idee. Supposing you aint certain sure it is the very day the Master was born, why it's good to set by one day for remembering he *was* born to save and sanctify us, and to give thanks to God for his unspeakable gift. And I like the givin' part of it amongst men. It's faulty, may be, but so be we, and it puts it into many a man an' woman's head to know the pleasure of givin', which I presume likely they wouldn't never have found out any other way. I take it that it's the sense of the word, 'If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' And it's nater as well as Scripter; ef you want to know how a thing is goin' to work, begin and work it; there aint no other reasonable way. If you can't trust the Lord, jest try him an' see if—"

Here the door opened, and little Doctor Tinker popped in, a big box in his arms, his face shining, his hair more towzled and rough than ever, and his voice as hearty and cheery as if he had been Santa Claus himself.

"Hello, Lea!" he called out, "how are you getting along? That's good. Here's a box came to my care last night. Steward kep' it till I came in just now, but it's all the better for comin' Christmas day. Looks like a letter nailed atop here. I'll take the tack out with my knife."

With trembling fingers Watson Lea took the letter, glanced at the direction, and opened it. It read as follows:

"Dear Mr. Lea: We, that is, your old scholars, wish you a Merry Christmas; and considering that you can't be real merry where we are give to understand you are spending the Day, why we've sent you a bag of nuts to crack; and to make it easy we put a nut-cracker atop. This kind is easy to open, and we hope you'll surely crack every one your own self, and not let the mersenary Hirelings of an Institootion [Simeon took this resounding phrase from one of his dime novels] have a chance to touch 'em. We are all reasonable well and hope you enjoy the same.

"Your youthful friend,

"Simeon Smith,

"*Chairman Schollars' Committee.*

"P. S.—We want to see you awfully. When are you coming back?

"These is their names, all of 'em."

And below followed a long string of names, both of girls and boys.

It was not a letter that did credit in its grammar or spelling to Mr. Lea's past teaching, but it did do credit to Simeon Smith and Co.'s kind feeling; and though Mr. Lea laughed at

the childish idea of sending him a bag of nuts, his eyes were moist and his voice shook a little as he said,

"Well, doctor, I've got a Christmas present after all."

"Shall I open the box for you?" asked Dr. Tinker.

"O, don't trouble about that; it's nothing but a bag of nuts my old school in Harper have sent me for Christmas."

"And we was jest talkin' about crackin' nuts in a snow-storm," said Daniel, with a little laugh.

"I'll open it now," said brisk Dr. Tinker, and after some searching he returned from the kitchen with a hammer and screw-driver, and soon wrenched off the cover of the pine box, disclosing a bag of sacking, which held a quantity of English walnuts, and tied outside of the bag a steel nut-cracker.

Watson Lea laughed. It was a dreary laugh at such a trivial, futile gift to his great need; and then he colored with shame, thinking of the kind young hearts that sent it.

"I think the nuts had better go to the children's ward," he said, quietly; "they will enjoy them."

"O, now! that's no fair, as the boys say," laughed the doctor. "When your boys and girls took the trouble to send them to you, Lea, you ought at least to try a few, before you give away your gift."

"That is so, doctor; give me one here. Put it on my knee so I can get hold of it; my right hand is good yet!"

So he managed to get the big, unwieldy nut in the grasp of the crackers. The shell flew apart at the first pressure, and out dropped—not the rich, dry kernel, but a gold coin, a half-eagle. One after another, in a state of amusing excitement, Dr. Tinker opened these Christmas nuts, and gathered up their shining kernels, for a sort of stupefaction kept Mr. Lea moveless and silent; while Daniel looked on with keen pleasure lighting his countenance, and satisfied eyes.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars, as I'm a living man!" shouted the eager doctor. "Come, old fellow, you aren't so helpless and friendless as you thought you were, eh?"

"Thank God!" said Watson Lea, solemnly; and Daniel Turner added "Amen."

The day after Christmas Simeon Smith received the following letter:

"My Dear Mr. Chairman: I should like to write a letter to every one of the dear girls and boys who sent me the bag of Christmas nuts, but I am not strong enough. And I can't say enough even to one of you. I do not think I can tell in any words what good your gift did me. I hope no one of you will ever be in this my situation, but if you ever should be you will know how I feel. I was without a cent, and I almost thought without a friend. A man can't be much worse off than that, unless he is without God. I can only send you in place of thanks the words of the Master, whom I hope you will all serve for all your living days:

"'I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: . . . I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

"Your affectionate and grateful friend,

"Watson Lea."

Nor did the Christmas nuts finish their good offices here. When Mr. Lea was able to leave the hospital, the kindly little doctor found him work—not very lucrative work, but a place where he earned enough to live on; and as soon as Daniel Turner was well again, he found a little tenement of three rooms waiting for him, with his wife to welcome him, and one lodger, his friend of the hospital. "Sary" took in washing and ironing, and Daniel found a place as janitor to a public building, and as long as they lived Mr. Lea was their constant friend and helper. He himself at last returned to his old place in Harper, married, and had a happy home; and whenever any friend or stranger asked him why he always had a sacking bag of English walnuts hanging on his children's tree at the great and sacred holiday, he would tell them this story of the Christmas nuts.

AT BETHLEHEM.

BY THE EDITOR.

In the spring of 1863 I visited Bethlehem. Our party rode over from Jerusalem—a distance of six miles. Leaving the Holy City (*El-Khuds*, as Jerusalem is now called) at two o'clock P. M., by the Jaffa gate (the western gate of the city opening toward *Jaffa* or Joppa), we crossed the valley of Hinnom, ascended the Hinnom ridge, to the south of the city, and soon found ourselves on the broad plain of Rephaim. We passed the old tomb of Rachel, and reaching a rounded hill-top, took a good look at *Beit-Lahm*, the Bethlehem of the Bible. I was not there on Christmas day, but on the 17th day of March, in the year of our Lord 1863, as I have already said.

Bethlehem stands on a long, narrow ridge, with a simple street—very narrow, of course, as are the streets of all Oriental cities. Its houses are of stone. Many of them are in ruins. On the northern and eastern sides of the ridge we saw a huge building like a fortress. This is the "Convent of the Nativity." It seems to be but one edifice, but really consists of three convents erected at different times. These are occupied by Latin, Greek, and Armenian Christians, and inclose the church built in commemoration of Christ's birth, and is said to cover the stable in which he was born.

Passing through a low door, we went within the huge walls of the convent. Through another door, and we stood in the ancient church, said to have been built in the third or fourth century after Christ. The church is in the shape of a cross. We entered the nave, or main room. It is about one hundred feet long and about ninety wide. The ceiling is supported by forty-eight immense and elegant stone columns—twelve in a line—four rows of them. Between the two middle rows the ceiling is raised much higher than on the sides, and on the walls of the elevated section are fragments of rich paintings, much defaced by the rain which comes down through the insufficient and broken roof. The walls and columns of the church were once decorated with pictures, and the floor overlaid with marble. Most of the pictures are ruined and the marble has been taken away. The main body of the church was not much cared for when I was there, and on rainy days it furnished a playground for the filthy children of the town, who resorted to it, much as our American children would to barn or garret, when the yard and street became too muddy for their games.

An old monk offered to show us the spot where Christ was born. While the old organ played in a dismal way we walked up the long aisle, turned into the Armenian transept, went down a long flight of steps until we reached what is called "the Grotto of the Nativity." This is a little room under the church about thirty-seven feet in length, and eleven or twelve wide. The walls and floor are lined with a greenish marble. Many elegant and costly lamps hang in the room. To the right we saw a small, semi-circular recess in the wall, in the floor of which is laid a star composed of precious stones and silver, and around it are these words in the Latin: "Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary."

Three elegant lamps are kept burning all the time over this star. Going down two steps farther to the right we entered a room, about ten feet square, where the monk showed us "the manger in which the Babe was laid after his birth." This is a marble block hollowed out and looks but little like a "manger," even of an Oriental sort. Here, too, hang gold and silver lamps.

All these details repelled me, because I had no faith in their reality. No one knows the precise spot of the nativity. Superstition is full of frauds, and out of the sacred shrines the monks make money. So I was glad to get out of the close, hot, and uncomfortable pit and pass into the fresh air again.

Once standing on the hill I could look down upon the beautiful plain of Bethlehem, just below the convent hill,

where once "shepherds kept watch over their flocks by night." And I could look up to the blue sky, once radiant with the glory of angelic presence and musical with the song of the advent. I was glad to turn from man's idolatry to the heaven of man's hope and destiny, and I thanked God for the gift of his Son to the race, as Teacher and King, as Saviour and Friend.

PENNSYLVANIA PUTZ.

BY G. E. VINCENT.

MANY of our Christmas customs and our best methods of holiday decoration we have learned from Germany, the land of philosophy, sausages, and toys. The German is fond of wonderful miniature villages, of impossible animals that perform unheard-of feats, and of all kinds of mechanical jokes, at Mother Nature's expense. This weakness crops out abundantly during the festivities of the holiday season.

Those who have left the fatherland to settle in our new country cling fondly to the old home ways, and bring up their children to love the same fat little cows and busy wind-mills that made their own childhood a delight.

None of these colonists have preserved more carefully the old traditions and customs than those whole-souled, hospitable folk who live along the Lehigh and Susquehanna Rivers, and whom we call in kindly jest "the Pennsylvania Dutch."

I once spent the holidays at a little city in the very heart of this region. As I think of that time, I am filled with recollections of smiling faces, good cheer, and royal hospitality. It was then that I made the acquaintance (it never became a friendship) of *sauerkraut*, *liverwürst*, *ponhaus*, and other strange dishes whose names I have forgotten. But turkey and chicken, and all the other good things which come before pumpkin pie and a headache, were there, so I parted with the strangers readily enough.

One morning as I stood at the window, watching people pass up and down the slippery sidewalks, my attention was attracted by a crowd of red-faced boys and girls who came trooping down the steps of a neighboring house, laughing gleefully and talking as fast as their tongues could go. I wondered what it all meant, and my gaze followed them.

They went slipping and sliding down the steep street to another house near by. One of the boys mounted the steps, and gave the knocker a loud rap, while the rest of the party jumped up and down upon the walk to keep warm. The door opened presently; there was a moment's conversation between the servant and the boy, who then beckoned to his comrades and darted into the house with the whole pack at his heels. In five or ten minutes the merry marauders reappeared and stormed another fortress.

At dinner I described these mysterious proceedings, and asked an explanation. This must have been a *putz* hunt, I was told. When I asked whether *putz* was any thing like *ponhaus* they laughed at me immoderately, and said I should go out on a *putz* hunt that very day.

Accordingly, we young people started early in the afternoon to visit *putz*, the German name, as my guides informed me, for a Christmas tree and its surroundings. We knocked first at the door of a handsome house which had a very German-looking name upon the door-plate.

"Got a *putz?*"

"Yes; come in."

This simple question is a pass-word to any house, rich or poor, at Christmas-tide. We were led through a long hall, and ushered into a darkened back-parlor. A very pretty sight met our gaze as we entered. Across one end of the room was a platform raised about three feet from the floor. This stage was laid out as a beautiful park. A stately castle, brightly lighted, stood on the brow of a hill. Carriage drives led down from it to the garden below, where a fountain was plashing, and where richly-dressed ladies and gentlemen stood in little groups. Farther along was a parade ground where tiny soldiers in Prussian uniforms stood in their ranks, while officers on horseback bobbed up and down as regularly as clock-work, which, in fact, was their means of motion. Then there was a mill grinding away for dear life, and a miller who walked with a very jerky step back and forth between the mill and his house near by, where his wife was washing clothes with an enthusiasm rendered spasmodic by imperfect oiling. At the end opposite the castle was a small Christmas tree, handsomely trimmed. The whole scene was lighted by reflecting lamps and a large number of tapers. I examined the *putz* closely, and was surprised to see how carefully the smallest details were arranged. The grass was green moss, and the paths the finest white sand. There were little lakes made of mirrors, and rivulets of glass beads, which, passing over wheels in endless cables, seemed to glide like real streams between their mossy banks. The millennium was realized in this little scene. Lions and lambs wandered in the same pasture, chickens fed contentedly under the very noses of wolves and foxes; in a word, the animals seemed to be on the old footing of Noah's time, and showed no disposition to make a Christmas dinner of each other. Under the tree was a pretty picture. The Christ-child lay in the manger, his mother near by, and about him knelt the wise men, with presents in their hands. By an arrangement of reflectors this one scene was brightly illuminated, while the surrounding objects were in comparative darkness.

At the next house a similar exhibition was in progress. Here the *putz* was much the same; the castle, garden, mill, and intimate animals appeared in all their glory. One thing struck me as amusing. Outside the stable in which the wise men were kneeling about the Christ-child, stood a policeman in full uniform leaning against a lamp-post, and apparently mounting guard over the magi's camels. The first and nineteenth centuries were as neighborly here as the lion and the lamb over yonder.

We visited many handsome *putz* that must have cost no end of money, but somehow I was most interested in those we found in the homes of the poor. Neat places most of these homes were. The mother dressed in the bright colors which German peasants admire, the father in a strange coat covered with large buttons, and the children in costumes combining the materials and styles of two continents, made a happy and proud group around the family *putz*. You could learn the occupation of the master of the house from the *putz*. This little iron-mill with its candle-fires and clock-work blast-engine was built by a "puddler" in the great mill near the river. That shaft and elevator and those tiny coal-cars were from the hand of a man who spends his time in the dark mines. His children stand about on tiptoe, and tell you that *fader* goes down a place like that and helps fill real coal-cars. It is delightful to see how proud these poor children are of their *putz*, however humble it may be. *Fader* and *mutter* made it. Those dear words mean as much to them as to the children of richer parents.

One place I shall never forget. A sad-eyed woman let us in. "It's not much," she said, "but I couldn't let the day go without a *putz*, the children like it so." She led us into a bare room. The signs of poverty were pitiably evident. In one corner stood the *putz*—a dry-goods box in which a poor, scrawny tree was fastened. Around the top of the box a white fence inclosed a few animals, which, having but two, or, at the most, three, legs apiece, did not threaten immediate escape. Cheap, tawdry ornaments made the tree look even more drooping and ashamed. The children, two boys and a tiny girl, looked first at the *putz* and then at us with a smile of triumph. "Johann died last summer, and it's been hard work getting along. He always made a *putz* and sold it afterward. I didn't want the children to miss it this year. I've done the best I could, but it is a poor thing. I couldn't buy much now that he's gone —" and the poor woman buried her face in the hair of the little girl. The tears came to our eyes as we listened, and looked at the poor box and tree. Dropping two or three little silver ponds in among the crippled

animals, we turned away, and quietly left the room. "That's the best *putz* of all," said one of our party on the way home. And so it was. A mother's love and self-sacrifice are greater ornaments than all the toys and tinsel in the world.

It was a delightful afternoon. I wish many of my readers might join in a real *putz* hunt, and learn by experience how interesting a sport it is.

A TROPICAL CHRISTMAS.

In another column Lieut. Frederick Schwatka gives his experiences of an arctic Christmas, and that our readers may have an idea of how things are done at the other end of the thermometer, we quote from Henry M. Stanley's "Through the Dark Continent," a description of a Christmas he spent at Vinya-Njara, in Africa:

Christmas day we passed most pleasantly and happily, like men determined to enjoy life while it lasted. In the morning we mustered all the men, and appointed them to their respective canoes. Names taken from those British cruisers which had become familiar to the east coast people were also given to them by the Zanzibaris, amid loud laughter, except to half a dozen which Frank and I reserved to bear such names as we selected for them.

Canoe-races were afterward instituted between the various vessels, and to the crews who excelled were awarded gifts of cloth. The afternoon was celebrated by foot-races, in which, for the sake of the prizes offered, the Arabs joined, occasioning much amusement to the people. The great event was the race between the famous Tippu-Tib and Francis Pocock. The Arab prepared himself with unusual determination to compete for the prize, a richly chased goblet and cup, one of the presents bestowed on me before leaving England. The course was three hundred yards, from end to end of the village street. Though Frank exerted himself to the utmost, the muscular sinews of the Arab carried him to the front at the finish by fifteen yards. Then the little boys of the expedition competed with the little boys of the escort, and finally ten young women were induced to attempt to compete for a prize, and their presence on the race-course convulsed the hundreds assembled to witness the unusual scene. Some were very ungainly and elephantine in their movements, especially Muscati, the wife of the chief Safeni, but others were most graceful of body and lithe of limb, and raced with the swiftness of Atalanta. But the girl Khamisi of Zanzibar was declared the winner.

A dance by a hundred Wanyamwezi, adorned in all the feathered glory and terror of war, with sounding drums and melodious blasts from ivory horns, terminated the extraordinary festivities.

BUT ONCE A YEAR.

Paul Du Chaillu in his "Land of the Midnight Sun" gives the following account of peculiar Christmas customs among the Swedish peasantry. While the annual bath is not recommended, our readers will confess that if one is to wash but once a year, Christmas time is most appropriate for the cheerful ceremony.

The day before Christmas, in the afternoon, every thing is ready—the house has been thoroughly cleaned, and leaves of juniper or fir are strewn on the floor. When the work is done the whole family generally go into the bakehouse, which has been made warm, and each member takes a thorough wash from head to foot, or a bath in a large tub—the only one many take during the year; then they put on clean linen, and are dressed. In the evening they gather round the table, the father reads from the liturgy, and oftener a chapter of the Bible, and then a hearty meal is taken. In many of the valleys and mountain-dales watch is kept during the whole of the night, and all are merry; candles are kept burning at the windows, and, as in Dalecarlia, the people flock to church, each carrying a torch.

A CHRISTMAS CONFLAGRATION.

In this century of progressive ideas, old methods often seem inadequate. The following anecdote, from the "Yale Record," shows how a young American improved on an old Christmas custom with dubious success:

"My husband is always making fun of me," remarked Mrs. Russell, to her nearest guest, "because I am so devoted to the old customs that have been handed down to us, don't you know."

Mrs. Russell was presiding at her Christmas dinner, and the remark just quoted was called forth by the atmosphere of expectancy which surrounded the table. There was no mystery connected with the event which all were anticipating, for Master Charles had announced with great *eclat* that "the puddin' was comin' all afire." Soon the waitress appeared with a blazing dish. Charley clapped his hands with delight, his mother's face wore an expression of supreme contentment, while the head of the house regarded the conflagration with a whimsical air of resignation. The flaming pudding was set before Mr. Russell, who sat back in his chair and waited for the fire to go out. This it seemed strangely averse to doing. A minute of silence passed. Then the tormenter began,

"Perhaps, my dear, one of the hand-grenades might—" "What an idea! It will go out in a moment." Another pause, during which there is a wicked twinkle in Mr. Russell's eye. "My dear, suppose we turn down the gas, draw up around this fire, and tell stories?" "You must have your joke, I suppose. Charley seems to enjoy it, at any rate." "Aint it jolly? I know why it burns so long; I did it. I thought it would be a surprise to you—'tis, aint it?" "I should think it was. What did you do?" "O nothin'; I just put on what there was in the can. There wasn't much though." "The can, what *do* you mean?" "Why, the kerosene can, of course; it's good as a torchlight procession, aint it?" "Mary, you may take out the pudding." "Yes, that's best," remarked the convulsed Mr. Russell; "it doesn't seem inclined to go out itself." "My dear, when you think that you can drink your coffee without choking, I will have it passed," replied Mrs. R.

HAWTHORNE AND MISTLETOE.

Lovers of Dickens will remember how that jolly old philanthropist Mr. Pickwick was caught by a bevy of young ladies under the mistletoe in Mr. Wardell's kitchen, and how gracefully he submitted to their flattering attentions. Nathaniel Hawthorne in his "English Note-Book" describes a case in which the victims were not so submissive.

On Christmas Eve and yesterday, there were little branches of mistletoe hanging in several parts of the house, in the kitchen, the entries, the parlor, and the smoking-rooms, suspended from the gas-fittings. The maids of the house did their utmost to entrap the gentlemen boarders, old and young, under the privileged places, and there to kiss them, after which they were expected to pay a shilling. It is very queer, being customarily so respectful, that they should assume this license now, absolutely trying to pull the gentlemen into the kitchen by main force, and kissing the harder and more abundantly the more they were resisted. A little rosy-cheeked Scotch lass—at other times very modest—was the most active in this business. I doubt whether any gentleman but myself escaped. I heard old Mr. S—— parleying with the maids last evening, and pleading his age; but he seems to have met with no mercy, for there was a sound of prodigious smacking immediately afterward. J—— was assaulted, and fought most vigorously; but was outrageously kissed, receiving some scratches, moreover, in the conflict. The mistletoe has white, wax-looking berries, and dull-green leaves, with a parasitical stem.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS.

Any one who has chanced to pass through a boarding-school town just before Christmas, when the young people are set at liberty and hurry homeward eager for holiday pleasures, will thoroughly appreciate this description by Washington Irving of his experience with three young "rogues" on an old-time English coach:

In the course of a December tour in Yorkshire, I rode for a long distance in one of the public coaches on the day preceding Christmas. The coach was crowded, both inside and out, with passengers, who, by their talk, seemed principally bound to the mansions of relations or friends, to eat the Christmas dinner. It was loaded also with hampers of game, and baskets and boxes of delicacies; and hares hung dangling their long ears about the coachman's box, presents from distant friends for the impending feast. I had three fine rosy-cheeked boys for my fellow passengers inside, full of the buxom health and manly spirit which I have observed in the children of this country. They were returning home for the holidays in high glee, and promising themselves a world of enjoyment. It was delightful to hear the gigantic plans of the little rogues, and the impracticable feats they were to perform during their six weeks' emancipation from the abhorred thralldom of book, birch, and pedagogue. They were full of anticipations of the meeting with the family and household, down to the very cat and dog; and of the joy they were to give their little sisters by the presents with which their pockets were crammed; but the meeting to which they seemed to look forward with the greatest impatience was with Bantam, which I found to be a pony, and, according to their talk, possessed of more virtues than any steed since the days of Bucephalus. How he could trot! how he could run! And then such leaps as he would take—there was not a hedge in the whole country that he could not clear. . . .

I was roused from this fit of luxurious meditation by a shout from my little traveling companions. They had been looking out of the coach windows for the last few miles, recognizing every tree and cottage as they approached home, and now there was a general burst of joy.

"There's John! and there's old Carlo! and there's Bantam!" cried the happy little rogues, clapping their hands. . . .

Off they set at last; one on the pony, with the dog bounding and barking before him, and the others holding John's hands; both talking at once, and overpowering him with questions about home, and with school anecdotes. I looked after them with a feeling in which I do not know whether pleasure or melancholy predominated; for I was reminded of those days when, like them, I had known neither care nor sorrow, and a holiday was the summit of earthly felicity.

Our Youth.

A PAPER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR TEACHERS.

JOHN H. VINCENT, EDITOR.

Price, $1 a year, when taken in clubs of TEN *to one address; single copies, $1 25.*

[*Entered at the New York Post-office for transmission through the mails at second-class rates.*]

CHRISTMAS greetings from the editor of OUR YOUTH to the young and the old who take an interest in these pages. A merry and a blessed Christmas day to every one of you!

THE nearest view of Christmas day is a human view, and gives a lively picture of home pleasures, family reunions, feasting and frolic, the giving and receiving of presents, decorations of holly and ivy, cedar and smilax, and "a good time" for every body, old and young, rich and poor.

THE hygienic benefits of Christmas are very great, in spite of the usual overloading of youthful stomachs with candy, turkey, "dressing," mince pie, and plum pudding. The suspension of business, the freedom from anxiety, the decoration of the house, the pleasure of family gatherings, the receiving of gifts, the surprises, the songs and merriment, the "rest" guaranteed to overtaxed brains and bodies, the religious memories—all these give recreation and exhilaration to our Christmas-keeping population.

"GOOD-WILL" is one of the brightest lights that burn on the Christmas tree. Animosities are quieted, and little acts of thoughtful kindness are implied apologies for past offenses. A trifling gift, selected with taste and judgment, and offered with true good-will, is like the outstretching of one's hand with honest desire for reconciliation. It is a new plea for peace. Jane forgets John's sharp words two weeks ago—words which made a sensitive soul "mad unto dead silence" for three days—as from the Christmas tree comes a delicate little souvenir "For Jane from John," with the legend in John's own hand, "Let love abide between us." Bridget forgets all the roughness and "impidence" of the children, as gift after gift comes to her "pile," manifestly (if twinkling eyes tell the heart's secret) given by truly sympathetic youngsters to impulsive Bridget, who is as much a child as any of them, and whose hard words of scolding and worrying are all condoned under the blaze and blessings of the Christmas tree. Verily the leaves and light of a Christmas tree are for the healing of hearts in the homes of the land.

CHRISTMAS has deeper meanings and wider relations than these domestic benefits imply. The roots of the Christmas tree lay hold of history, and its branches reach out and up into the world of religious doctrines and religious hopes. Christmas is a religious feast-day. It commemorates great events in both this and another world. It has to do with God and heaven, with miracles and with angels, with human wonder and with celestial song and proclamation. All that revealed religion means is connected in some way with Christmas day. It is, in truth, a monument to the facts recorded in the New Testament. It is at this point that Bible history meets human tradition and memorial institutions. Jesus was born into this world. It is a simple and incontrovertible fact. The precise day may not be known. But the observance of a day by all branches of the Christian Church as the birthday of Jesus is present proof of his former life on earth. He came from heaven. Angels announced his birth. It was at a time when the world expected some such divine revelation. It was at a time when such revelation could make its deepest and most permanent impression on the world. The people—wise men in the west and wise men in the east, plain men in their shops and plain men among their flocks—were waiting for "the coming King," the "Messiah," the Teacher "looked for and longed for." And he came. He came to the earth from the invisible and eternal heavens. He came to teach men, to tell them of the Father, of his love and purpose, of the glorious destiny beyond the grave, and of the way out of sin into holiness, out of self into love, out of death into life. And this is what Christmas means.

WE do not know the precise day of the birth of Jesus; nor the month; nor with certainty the very year. This uncertainty does not impair the force of the proof that Jesus was born. Of many men whose lives have graven deep and ineffaceable lines in human history we are compelled to say, No one knows the day or year of their birth. This is true of Socrates, and of Shakespeare, and of Abraham Lincoln. But these men lived. And Jesus lived, and he wrought great works and taught great truths, and the hold of his thoughts and personal character on the race is one of the most incontrovertible facts of history. Christmas reminds the world of his record. The 25th of December is the day selected by a branch of the Church long ago as the birthday of Jesus. It is very likely a mistake. The records of the Church are full of human blunders about matters of time and forms, of sacred days and sacred things. For the truth is that too great exactness in these matters and too great attention to them tend to damage the cause of spiritual religion. They exalt non-essentials. They obscure realities of faith and worship. They foster idolatry. They promote a hurtful sentimentality. They impart undue significance—a sacramental and talismanic value to seasons and signs and services. Now all this is opposed to the spirit and aim of the Gospel. Therefore, the New Testament makes nothing of forms, ceremonies, days, and seasons; it requires no more outward observance than is necessary to commemorate the salient facts of Christian history. It is a system of life and spirit, not of form and ceremony. No one knows the exact time of the birth of Jesus nor the precise spot. The Roman Catholic Church locates these things, but the Bible does not, and it will be safe generally to take for granted that all such ecclesiastical localizations are mistakes. When in Palestine we usually avoided the identifications of Rome as we take for granted concerning her teachings that, for the most part, where there is no specific and reiterated "Thus saith the Lord" to sustain them, they are at the farthest remove from the truth. No, the time and spot of the birth of Jesus are not certain. It was somewhere in Bethlehem about 1885 years ago. That he lived and that he lives are the great truths. Let all questions of detail as to when and where sink into insignificance. Live in him! Live for him! And may we forever live with him!

CHRISTMAS IN THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

BY J. L. HURLBUT, D.D.

Of all the days in the "Christian year," Christmas is the one most widely recognized and most heartily celebrated in the Sunday-school. Every Sunday-school upon the continent, whether held under Gothic arches, or in a log-cabin or a sod-house, will pay some attention to Christmas. There is an appropriateness in this general recognition, for the joyfulness of the Christmas-tide is the trait which should characterize the Sunday-school at all seasons, and the thought of the Christ-child appeals to the heart of childhood every-where. No appeal is needed, therefore, for our Sunday-schools to observe the Christmas festivities; but a few suggestions may be offered as to the manner of its celebration.

First of all, it should be remembered that Christmas is a religious festival, and not a secular anniversary. Let there be in its observance all the joy that can be compassed in a single day; let its atmosphere be fragrant with gladness to young and old; let the Christmas tree be reared with all its wondrous fruitage; let Santa Claus come down the chimney if he chooses; but in all our pleasures let us keep in mind that Christmas represents God's unspeakable gift to the world, his own and only Son. You will see multitudes of Christmas cards without a Christian thought in either the picture or its accompanying motto; you will find Christmas exhibitions without a Gospel idea in their performance. Two years ago, a lady teaching a primary class in a mission-school asked her little pupils if they could tell her what Christmas meant, and why it was kept. The hundred and fifty faces were blank, until at last one little hand went up and a child answered, "It means to hang up greens!" Christmas may be made a mighty opportunity for fixing some of the great truths of redemption ineffaceably in the minds of the children. See that no card is given in your school and no celebration held without having somewhere stamped into it the central thought of the Christmas story, the coming of God to earth in the form of a little child.

The programme for the Christmas celebration should not be so elaborate as to require extensive rehearsing. We have known of schools where the lesson was neglected for weeks in order to teach carols which were to be used but once and then be laid aside and to drill the scholars in the parts of a semi-theatrical exhibition. The Sunday-school exists for the purpose of instruction, but not merely for instruction in music, however classical, nor for instruction in dramatic performances, however æsthetic. Its training should be in Bible lore and in Christian character, toward which all its exercises should tend; and its entertainments should never be permitted to encroach upon its legitimate work. Nor is this surrender of the school to Christmas for a month at all necessary. Good entertainments can be devised which will please as well and profit far more than those which exhaust the power of the school in a single performance.

Nor is it necessary that the gifts of the Sunday-school to its scholars should be expensive. In a Church school most of the children will receive presents at home which will be far more valuable than the very best which the school can bestow; and even in a mission-school a simple gift will be appreciated as well as one more costly. It is not well to lure scholars by the bait of a fine present at Christmas. Let them come to the school for its teachings and its enjoyments, but not from any mercenary motive. Notice the day with gifts which will be appropriate and will commemorate the offerings of the wise men to their infant Lord; but avoid all idea of prizes in their distribution.

Let us keep before our scholars the thought, that Christmas is a time for giving rather than getting, that they gain the most of its pleasure and enter the deepest into its thought who open their hands to present Christmas gifts to others; and, above all, let us teach our scholars that the season which reminds the world of God's choicest gift, and of the gifts which men of old offered on bended knees before the manger of the Christ, is the best time of all the year for the offering of themselves, the living sacrifice, to the service of the Lord.

OUR BEREAN HOMILY.

Of all Christian days which men have set apart the most important and the most sacred is Christmas day. It is the true beginning of sacred days in the Church calendar. It is at the root of all the rest. Even Easter had not been but for Christmas.

The child Jesus was born in Bethlehem. That was all. But from that birth came all the grand events of Christian history, all the sublime truths of Christian theology. The babe became the man, the teacher, the wonder-worker, the "man of sorrows," the Redeemer, the "resurrection and the life," and the "King of kings." Look from the lowliness of the manger in Bethlehem to the majesty of the throne in heaven.

From the plains and stable of Bethlehem came a light, the rays of which touch the remotest period of human history, brightening every century, beautifying every home, blessing every member of the race—old men and children, plain men and princes, slaves and statesmen. Every body is interested in Christmas.

Heaven was opened on Christmas day. There is a wonderful world beyond the limits of the visible—a world of spirits, a world of purity, a world of unutterable blessedness. There the great Creator of this great universe is known, worshiped, and loved by splendid beings who are wise with celestial wisdom, and whose innermost joy is in the love of God, and of the truth and grace which are so well pleasing to God. Do these heavenly intelligences care for man? Do thrones and principalities and powers in heaven care for bound, perplexed, and sorrowing souls on earth? The opened heavens over the plains of Bethlehem more than 1880 years ago answered the question. The songs of the angels and the command to the shepherds answered the question.

Through the opened heavens on the first Christmas-tide, a Father's voice was heard. Not only is heaven interested, but God as our father cares for the race. The babe came as the Son of God to be the Son of man, and to make men sons of God. He came to walk through the whole way of life, from birth to death, that by experience he might learn the secret of human life with its sorrow, and acquire a knowledge of its speech that he might leave with souls full of sin and anxiety words of comfort and healing.

Through the opened heavens came the great gift of heaven—the first Christmas gift—love incarnate. This gift embraces all good things—an unspeakable gift; for our poverty—wealth; for our blindness—sight; for our guilt—pardon; for our feebleness—strength; for our slavery—freedom; for our grief—joy and gladness.

Let us, therefore, on this best day of all Church days, turn from the manger to the throne, and give hearty thanks for Christmas teachings concerning God and heaven and the salvation of man. And let us keep the day with gladness, and tell its good news to the world.

OUR NOTE-BOOK.

The Sunday-school Superintendent referred to in our editorials of last week is George S. Bennett, Esq., of Wilkesbarre, Pa.

Last year there were 196 women in attendance at the University at Michigan. The most of these were connected with the literary department. Girls have a right to the highest education. And they have capacity as well as right, and ability equal to capacity.

A well-scrubbed floor is neater, more "stylish," and more promotive of health than a soiled and dusty Axminster or Brussels, however brilliant in color, solid in texture, or elegant in design. Some of the plainest houses are made really beautiful by soap and sand, brush and water. Let "our girls" take notice. What if the boys "help scrub?" Why not?

A sensible and wealthy business man often quotes the following wholesome sentiment in homely verse:

> "You can notch it on the palin' as a mighty risky plan
> To form your judgment by the clothes you see upon the man.
> For I scarcely need remind you how you often come across
> A fifty-dollar saddle on a twenty-dollar hoss."

The Roman Catholic Church has a perfect right to be in this country. Paralyzed be the un-American hand uplifted to prevent or to vote against this right! But watch her carefully that she does not get the control of this country. She is a wily mistress, and means mischief.

A strong and substantial house of brick, granite, or iron is no more dependent upon the materials with which it is built, than is a successful life upon good sense and moral courage.

An Englishman seated at dinner in a Swiss hotel heard a Frenchman relate how he had scaled the Gespaltenhorn in the Bernese Oberland, and planted on the summit a silk flag embroidered with his name. Determined to uphold the British reputation, the Englishman climbed the same mountain the next day, and finding the flag fixed on the topmost peak, returned with it and sent it to the Frenchman, who was staying in the adjacent village.

SIN THE WORST.

Walking along the shore one morn,
A holy man by chance I found,
Who by a tiger had been torn,
And had no salve to heal his wound.
Long time he suffered grievous pain,
But not the less to the Most High
He offered thanks. They asked him why.
For answer, he thanked God again;
And then to them: "That I am in
No greater peril than you see;
That what has overtaken me
Is but misfortune—and not sin."—*R. H. Stoddard.*

A CHRISTMAS TEMPERANCE HOMILY.

If all the money spent on intoxicating drink during the past year could this Christmas morning be brought in and laid on the Christmas breakfast table what wonderment it would cause!

If each man could by some mystic power place before his family this morning the amount he has spent in liquor the twelve months past, what confusion and humiliation would follow!

He no longer owns the amount, of course, but there it is glittering on the almost empty board—enough to have clothed the whole family; enough to have paid the rent; enough to have spread the table with a bountiful breakfast, and to have provided for a princely Christmas dinner. He has spent it all on himself, on his basest self, on his lowest appetites. He has nothing left of it but weakness of will, strength of brute desire, bitter memories, abused wife, ragged and starving children, debt, popular contempt, and what is worse—self-contempt. Alas! how weak are human resolutions! All this degradation and loss are in spite of the firm purpose and recorded pledge of a year ago.

Wife and children look at first with glad surprise on the recovered treasure. A second thought puts a shadow over every face, for they know that the money is only a memory, or, if substantial, it is a reality to which they have no right. All that treasure gone! And he did it. He who was sworn to protect and support and bless them—he of the blear eyes, the trembling hand, the bloated cheeks—he did it. What they might have had this Christmas day! Alas! alas!

But this money has no right here. Come, take it away, you who "own" it—saloon-keepers, rum-sellers—you who are well-fed, well-clothed, fattened on the weakness and wrong of your fellow-men—come and take it away. You have taken it by dimes, now take it in dollars. Take it from the pale-faced wife and hungry children. Take it this Christmas day. Take it to your own burdened table and jolly children. Take it to fill your till and to swell your bank account. Take it—but remember the day of reckoning. The curse of God be on you as you count it!

Will our young readers form habits that lead to such bondage? Or will they be free? Will they ever sacrifice manhood for rum, or honor for money? Will they befriend the drunkard by swearing eternal enmity to his avaricious enemy—the liquor-seller? Shall this crime be stopped in our land? Answer this Christmas day.

And remember the drunkard's victims on this blessed day of fun and feasting. Put into their desolate hearts and homes some of the brightness which has come into your lives.

A CHRISTMAS MISSIONARY HOMILY.

Christmas is a Christian day. Its lessons are full of Christian ideas. One of them is the unity of our race. All men are brothers. God is Father. He cares for all and commends to each an interest in all.

Selfishness looks after personal comfort and the prosperity of one's immediate family and friends—unless, indeed, looking after friends does not interfere with personal ease and pleasure. Selfishness says: "Let other people take care of themselves. What is a Briton to me—or a Chinaman, or a Patagonian?" This is selfishness. It may be very "cultivated" and exceedingly "witty and agreeable"—but it is selfishness, and selfishness is anti-Christian. It is opposed to the spirit of Him who "pleased not himself" but lived and died for others. He told his followers to tell the story of his life and love and doctrines and purposes to "every creature" of the race. He commanded it. He had his reasons. If we believe in him it is our business to obey him, even if we do not know or cannot comprehend his reasons. Therefore we *ought* to send the good news of the Christ to all the world. We OUGHT. Our inclination, our doubts, our prejudices, our selfish desire to spend all of our money on ourselves, must all yield before the stern OUGHT of the missionary service.

Therefore *give* to the missionary cause. Give your share of the "*two millions* for missions." Give regularly. Give according to your means. Give until you feel it. Make some sacrifice. And give a "Christmas gift," over and above your regular offering, to the Missionary Society of your Church.

THE OXFORD LEAGUE.

THE CHRISTMAS CONFERENCE.

There had been several Conferences of the early Methodist preachers in this country before the famous "Christmas Conference," which formally organized the "Methodist Episcopal Church" in 1784.

The first Annual Conference was held, July 14, 1773, at Philadelphia; the second, at the same place, in May, 1774; the third, at Philadelphia again, in May, 1775; the fourth, at Baltimore, in 1776; the fifth, at Deer Creek, in Maryland, in 1777; the sixth, at Leesburg, Virginia, in 1778. Those were days that tried men's souls. They were days of war and privation, of misunderstanding and persecution. But brave men went on undismayed, preaching the word in season and out of season, anywhere and every-where, the cause of a free Gospel, a full salvation, and conscious peace with God, gaining ground in all parts of the country.

The close of the war and the independence of the country broke the bonds which held our people to the Church of England, and steps were taken for independent action by which, with the new *régime* in America, the old and apostolic doctrines of primitive Christianity might be proclaimed, and the most ancient Church be established here. Mr. Wesley had ordained Dr. Thomas Coke, a Church of England presbyter, or elder, to serve as Superintendent or Bishop. He arrived in New York November 3, 1783, and, on consultation with the brethren, "it was agreed to call a General Conference to meet at Baltimore the ensuing Christmas."

On Christmas day, 1784, the "Christmas Conference" met in Baltimore; Coke and Asbury were elected Superintendents, or Bishops; the Articles of Religion and form of discipline, approved by Mr. Wesley, were adopted, and the first Episcopal Church of America organized—that is, "The Methodist Episcopal Church."

The first step after organizing the Church was to establish a college. This was done, and the institution named (after the two Bishops, Coke and Asbury) "Cokesbury College." Concerning the significance of this movement and its history, we shall tell our young readers later on.

It was fitting that the Conference which organized the first Episcopal Church in America should meet on Christmas day. It was the birthday of a new era in theological thought on this side of the sea; the birthday of a new organization which was to reproduce the labors and the successes of primitive Christianity; the birthday that was to sound forth again the song of the angels on the first Christmas day: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to men."

Intelligent young Methodist Episcopal Christians will remember with joy and gratitude the "Christmas Conference."

An Oxford League has been organized at State Street Methodist Episcopal Church, Watertown, N. Y., Rev. C. C. Townsend, pastor. Nov. 12, the Secretary, Katie Winch, reports meetings as having been held with twenty members, new names being added at nearly every meeting.

THE SCHOOL AT HOME.

While we have shown that our *School at Home* is free from many of the disagreeable features to be found in other schools, we never meant to imply that it would not recognize the natural and inalienable right of its pupils to a week of freedom and jollity at Christmas-tide. We heartily recommend to the members of our school the sentiment of the little Latin song which English school-boys used to sing while they waited for the coaches and post-chaises that were to whirl them away for the holidays at home:

Omne benè,	We are as free,
Sine poenâ;	As free can be;
Tempus est ludendi.	The time has come for playing.
Venit hora;	This is the day;
Absque mora	Without delay
Libros deponendi.	Our books aside we're laying.

But as the school-books are laid aside, we have others to put into your hands, books which are full of the Christmas spirit and which are well worth reading during Christmas week.

The strains which the angel choir began on the night of the nativity have been taken up on earth by countless poets. Among the strongest and most beautiful of this poetry is the "Hymn on the Nativity," written by John Milton in the seventeenth century. This poem is far from simple, and cannot be comprehended at first glance. It must be studied carefully and thoughtfully before its sublimity and beauty are revealed. A Sunday afternoon could not better be employed than in reading this classic poem.

Charles Dickens's Christmas stories are the best known and most widely read contributions to our Christmas literature. Those who have not read his "Christmas Carol," "The Cricket on the Hearth," etc., have in store a treat which they should soon enjoy, while those who have, need no urging to repeat the pleasant task.

William Makepeace Thackeray wrote a Christmas book containing two stories which we are sure would interest and delight our readers. One is entitled "Dr. Birch's School." It describes the different kinds of boys to be found at a boarding-school, and although it is written of

English lads, many of the caps would fit young American heads quite snugly. The other story, "The Rose and the Ring," is a fairy tale, told with charming humor, and, though intended for little people, it is not likely to be laid aside unread by even the oldest member of the household.

Washington Irving has written in a captivating way about English life in the days when well-loaded coaches were still bowling along at ten miles in the hour, and the railway meant only rude tracks in the Cornish mines. Among Irving's most delightful sketches are descriptions of a Christmas spent at the home of an English country gentleman. There was no end of roaring fires, happy faces, merry sports, good cheer, and whole-hearted hospitality. Sir Walter Scott thus describes a similar scene:

"The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry men go
To gather in the mistletoe.
Then opened wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all."

For the sake not only of the thought, but of the form, we quote a passage from Washington Irving. Notice the simplicity of the language. It is a great mistake to suppose that long words, complicated sentences, and high-flown expressions constitute a finished and elegant style. Simplicity is often the highest art.

"Nothing in England exercises a more delightful spell over my imagination than the lingerings of the holiday customs and rural games of former times. They recall the pictures my fancy used to draw in the May morning of life, when as yet I only knew the world through books, and believed it to be all that poets had painted it; and they bring with them the flavor of those honest days of yore in which, perhaps, with equal fallacy, I am apt to think the world was more homebred, social, and joyous than at present. I regret to say that they are daily growing more and more faint, being gradually worn away by time, but still more obliterated by modern fashion. They resemble those picturesque morsels of Gothic architecture which we see crumbling in various parts of the country, partly dilapidated by the waste of ages, and partly lost in the additions and alterations of later days. Poetry, however, clings with cherishing fondness about the rural game and holiday revel, from which it has derived so many of its themes—as the ivy winds its rich foliage about the Gothic arch and moldering tower, gratefully repaying their support by clasping together their tottering remains, and, as it were, embalming them in verdure.

"Of all the old festivals, however, that of Christmas awakens the strongest and most heartfelt associations. There is a tone of solemn and sacred feeling that bends with our conviviality, and lifts the spirit to a state of hallowed and elevated enjoyment. The services of the Church about this season are extremely tender and inspiring. They dwell on the beautiful story of the origin of our faith, and the pastoral scenes that accompanied its announcement. They gradually increase in fervor and pathos during the season of advent, until they break forth in full jubilee on the morning that brought peace and good-will to men. I do not know a grander effect of music on the moral feelings than to hear the full choir and the pealing organ performing a Christmas anthem in a cathedral, and filling every part of the vast pile with triumphant harmony."

OUR CHRISTMAS CYCLOPEDIA.

Boar's Head.—It was the custom in merry old England for the butler with great ceremony to bring into the banquet hall at Christmas dinner a boar's head ornamented with flowers and ribbons. As the smoking dish appeared a Latin song was struck up.

Carols.—Originally religious songs dating back to the second century. Gradually degenerated until they were prohibited by clergy. Under Saxon kings in England they were revived and a gayer element introduced. Puritans abolished them and substituted psalms in 1642. At present, in England, merry songs sung on Christmas morning.

Christmas.—Celebration of Christ's nativity. Appears in history about 190 A. D. The day December 25 probably not real date. At first the day was observed any time in January, February, or March. December 25 probably adopted because it is at the winter solstice, when the sun is nearest the earth. Germans held a festival at this date before they were Christianized.

Christmas-box.—A gift made to a servant or one in a lower position than the donor. An English custom and term.

Christmas Tree.—The Romish Church in order to convert the heathen Germans, instituted all manner of festivities, dramas, and songs. Trees decorated with various ornaments were an outgrowth of this same plan. These trees have always been a characteristic of German Christmas celebrations.

Lord of Misrule.—A man appointed to superintend the boisterous Christmas games which were permitted in old England at Christmas time.

Mistletoe.—A parasitical bush to be found on many trees in southern England, and more rarely in other localities and countries. It has white translucent berries, and leaves of a yellowish-green color. It was regarded as a sacred plant by the Druids in early England. The custom of kissing under the mistletoe appears in both English and German history. The precise origin of this custom is not known.

Santa Claus, St. Nicholas, Kris Kringle.—St. Nicholas was a saint of the early Church, and his birth was celebrated in Germany about December 6 with ceremonies much like those afterward employed at Christmas time. Gradually the celebration of St. Nicholas' day and of the nativity became identical. Santa Claus and Kris Kringle (Dutch) are almost synonymous with St. Nicholas.

Yule-Log.—Yule was the name for the celebration of the return of the sun or fire-wheel at the winter solstice. The yule-log which in England used to be drawn in and put on the hearth Christmas-eve is a relic of fire-worship.

RECREATION.

[In this department we shall describe games old and new, for in-doors and out. Suggestions and comments from our subscribers will be welcome.]

CHRISTMAS TREES.

EVERY well-regulated family should have a Christmas tree. Children take delight in it, young people are to be pitied who do not enjoy it, and old people always love to watch the happy company about it. Next to the satisfaction of sitting under your own "vine and fig-tree" is the pleasure of gathering around the brightly lighted, wonderfully laden Christmas tree. Long may this green tree, with its marvelous fruits, flourish in our American homes, the center of a merry throng, and of happy recollections! Because our Churches and Sunday-schools have Christmas trees do not think the home tree unnecessary. Cling to the old custom, and make the home circle the brightest, jolliest, dearest spot in all the world.

Christmas trees cause some trouble, to be sure. They usually insist on shedding their foliage, and then weep candle-grease in penitence, but "with all their faults we love them still," and would not banish them for these little frailties. The tree once admitted, how shall we deck it for the festive rites of Christmas-tide? A very pretty and at the same time inexpensive tree is what we may call

THE ARCTIC TREE.

A well-shaped hemlock shrub is best suited for this purpose. Fix it firmly in a broad low box. The idea is to give the shrub the appearance of a tree heavily loaded down with snow and ice. The snow effect is secured by tearing (not cutting) cotton batting into long narrow strips, and fastening them with thread or fine wire along the top of each branch. When this has been done, the tree will begin to look quite wintry. Now for the ice. Almost all large toy stores in cities have glass icicles in stock. Suspend these icicles along the snow-covered branches. The weight of the glass will cause them to droop quite naturally. Then over the whole tree sprinkle "diamond dust," a preparation of mica, to be had at almost any drug store, which will make the snow glisten and give the green of the tree a frosty look. Tinsel shreds also may be used to advantage. About the base of the tree an Arctic scene may be introduced. Cover the box with cotton to represent the snow-clad earth. Snow-houses may be made of the same material, and skillful fingers will find little difficulty in fashioning a few Esquimaux. A sledge and a half-dozen toy dogs will complete the scene. Over all sprinkle the magic powder. Pure white candles should be used to light the tree, which with its contrasts of dark green and snow white will make a fairy-like picture. If the glass icicles cannot be obtained a substitute may easily be found in small cylindrical glass beads, which are to be bought almost anywhere. Make strings of these on white thread four or five inches long, and hang them on the branches. Instead of the diamond dust, isinglass may be powdered *very fine* in a mortar, but it is better if possible to obtain it already prepared. Tinsel may be bought in sheets and cut up into very narrow strips, but this too is better when made for the purpose. Give the "Arctic Tree" a trial. We are sure you will like it. Remember that it will appear to best advantage only when the room is darkened and the candles lighted.

CHRISTMAS EVE GAMES.

CHRISTMAS EVE should be a jolly time in the family circle. Little people, we all agree, find more enjoyment in their simple games than their elders can derive from more intellectual amusements. Christmas Eve is one night in the year when the older ones should unbend and enter fully into the rollicking spirit of the hour. There are a great many old games, a few so old as to be new to some readers perhaps, which may be revived on this happy night—games which will make the tiny toddler wild with delight, and keep grandfather chuckling in a way that will do your heart good. Here are a few of these old games and harmless practical jokes:

THE FLOUR AND RING.

Pack a coffee cup—the deeper it is the better—with dry flour, and inverting it over a plate gently raise the cup and leave the smooth mold of flour upon the plate. At first it may not come out whole on account of too close packing, but a little practice will enable you to make the mold perfectly. The mold once made drop upon the center of the top a plain gold ring, and range the players (as large a number as you please) about the table on which the flour mold stands. The one selected to start the game must take a knife and cut off a piece of the mold from *the top clear through to the plate*, then hand the knife to his right hand neighbor who repeats the process, and so on around the circle. The one who either by cutting too close to the ring or by undermining the column causes the ring to fall must pick it out of the flour *with his teeth*, unassisted by his hands. The excitement of the game, and the merriment over the appearance of the unfortunate, lead usually to more than one refilling of the cup.

THE BLIND FEEDING THE BLIND.

This laughable spectacle is provided by blindfolding a couple of young gentlemen and seating them opposite one another at arm's-length. Give each a spoon, and place on an ottoman between them a soup-plate full of granulated sugar. Each must then try to fill his spoon with sugar and deposit it in the other's mouth, which must be kept wide open for the purpose. The appearance of these two blindfolded, open-mouthed, groping individuals, as they carefully pour sugar into each other's ears, necks, and faces generally, is ridiculous in the extreme.

A CRULLER RACE.

This race has all the amusement of the scene just described, for those who look on, and furnishes no little excitement to those who take part. The preliminaries are as follows: A piece of twine several feet long is fastened at one end to the upper hinge of a door, or to something else about eight feet from the floor. The other end should be tied to the handle of a cane. Along this line at intervals of eighteen inches suspend ordinary crullers (the larger the better) by short cords which, when the long line is stretched horizontally, will hold the crullers where they can be reached easily by the lips of a person standing on the floor. Necessary adjustments may be made for people of different height. Each contestant folds his arms behind him, and stands under his particular cruller. The judge holds the cane by which the line is stretched, and at the word "Go" gently shakes the crullers, which dance about, evading the eager mouths. The group, as they stand on tiptoe and with open mouths grope after the coquettish cakes, look not unlike a nestful of young robins when the mother comes home with a tempting worm. The person who without unfolding his arms has first swallowed his cruller claims the prize. Now comes the satisfaction for the defeated contestants, when the judge solemnly declares with great dignity that Mr. or Miss —— has won the honorable and enviable title of P. I. G.

THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

The Civil War in Peru.

AFFAIRS in Peru have reached a new stage and again demand consideration. This civil war began two years ago when the causeless conflict with Chili came to a close. The Chilian invasion was most disastrous to Peru. Her armies were beaten, her cities sacked, her navy utterly destroyed, and her only hope of peace lay in the surrender of the immense deposits of guano and nitre which had been the basis of her commercial prosperity. The constitutional government went down before the invader and two parties arose in the state. The one, headed by Gen. Iglesias, demanded peace at any cost, hoping by a period of tranquillity to restore the shattered resources of the nation. Iglesias signed the humiliating treaty of peace in October, 1883, and assumed the duties of President until an election should be held. His government was recognized as legitimate by the United States and by most of the European nations. But there was opposition at home. Gen. Caceres, who represented the national hatred of Chili, denied the authority by which Iglesias had signed away the most valuable districts of Peru. He too, as the surviving member of an administration which had been set up during the troublous times of the invasion, claimed the presidency, and gathered an army to support his pretensions.

The war of the rival parties has dragged along for two years. The scanty revenues have been wasted upon fruitless expeditions against Caceres, who has defended himself among the mountains. In October the government gathered all its energies to strike a decisive blow. The rebel general retreated before the attacking force until he had drawn it far from the capital. Then he gave battle and was defeated. On November 24 the news came that the civil war was over. Only two days later Lima, the capital, was startled by tidings of the approach of the rebels. Caceres had outflanked his conquerors and was hastening toward the defenseless city. On the first of December he entered Lima with his army. Iglesias was forced to resign, and a commission was appointed to govern until new elections can be held. The interests of the nation demand peace, but the triumph of the anti-Chilian party is liable to re-open the miserable war which has already cost Peru so much suffering.

The British Elections.

THE elections for the Parliament of 1880 resulted in a large majority for the Liberal party over the combined vote of the Conservatives and Irish. W. E. Gladstone, as the foremost man of his party, became Premier, and held that office until the session of 1885, when the Liberal majority in the House of Commons, weakened by the government policy in the Soudan and on the Afghan frontier, disappeared altogether. Mr. Gladstone immediately resigned, and was succeeded by a Conservative cabinet, with the Marquis of Salisbury at its head. The new government did not possess the confidence of Parliament, and therefore determined to appeal to a general election in the hope of a favorable majority.

The canvass was interesting for several reasons. In Ireland, Mr. Parnell, knowing that the two great parties were likely to be closely balanced, laid his plans with the greatest care. Every Nationalist candidate was pledged to act with the majority of his party on every occasion. Thus the Irish members of Parliament constitute a compact body casting eighty votes on the side of that party which will purchase them with the greatest concessions to the cause of Home Rule in Ireland.

The prospects of a Liberal majority were brilliant until near the close of the campaign. Mr. Gladstone, the central figure of British politics, did not take an active part in the canvass, making few speeches, and leaving to younger men the more arduous duties of party leadership. Most prominent among these younger leaders was Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who represents the extreme Radical wing of the Liberals. Some of his public utterances were thought to threaten the safety of the State Church. Here was the opportunity for which the Tories had been waiting. Lord Salisbury and Lord Randolph Churchill cried out that a Liberal victory meant the overthrow of the great religious system which is so closely connected with the life of the people, and with the history of the nation. Mr. Gladstone disclaimed any hostility to the Church, but the opposition had at last found something to talk about and they pressed the question upon the attention of the people, The elections of the first few days pointed to a complete rout of the Liberals, but the returns from the counties were adverse to the Conservatives, and the latest footings give neither party a clear majority. In this condition of affairs the wisdom of Mr. Parnell's course is apparent, and it seems that he and his band of sworn followers will dictate their own terms.

The following article upon the parliamentary elections of 1880 is taken from the "History of Our Own Times," by Justin M'Carthy:

The dissolution of Parliament took place on March 24th, 1880, and the elections began. The result cannot be better described than in the words of Lord Beaconsfield himself in the celebrated speech which depicted a sudden breakdown of the Liberal party in an attack upon Lord Derby's government: "It was like a convulsion of nature rather than any ordinary transaction of human life. I can only liken it to one of those earthquakes which take place in Calabria and Peru. There was a rumbling murmur, a groan, a shriek, a sound of distant thunder. There was a rent, a fissure in the ground, and then a village disappeared; then a tall tower toppled down; and the whole of the ministerial benches became one great dissolving view of anarchy." For with the very first day of the elections it was evident that the Conservative majority was already gone. Each succeeding day showed more and more the change that had taken place in public feeling. Defeat was turned into disaster. Disaster became utter rout and confusion.

When the elections were over it was found that the Conservative party were nowhere. A majority of some hundred and twenty sent the Liberals back into power. No Liberal statesmen in our time ever saw themselves sustained by such an army of followers.

There was a moment or two of hesitation—of delay. The queen sent for Lord Hartington; she then sent for Lord Granville; but every one knew in advance who was to come into power at last. The strife lately carried on had been the old duel between two great men. Mr. Gladstone had stood up for some years against Lord Beaconsfield and fought him alone. He had dragged his party after him into many a danger. He had compelled them more than once to fight where many of them would have held back, and where none of them saw any chance of victory. Now, at last, the battle has been given to his hands, and it was a matter of necessity that the triumph should bring back to power the man whose energy and eloquence had inspired the struggle. The queen sent for Mr. Gladstone, and a new chapter of English history opened, with the opening of which this work has to close.

The Small-pox in Montreal.

THE small-pox appeared in Montreal early in February. The few cases were among the poor, and scarcely came to the notice of the health authorities. By the middle of August the daily death-rate had risen to fifty. The city government took no decisive action. It was not till the last week in September that the English residents determined to check, if possible, the ravages of the disease. Compulsory vaccination was ordered. But the ignorant and superstitious French Canadians rebelled. They relied for protection upon processions in honor of the saints, and, like their brothers in Spain and Italy, they wore the medal of Saint Roche as a disinfectant. During the last three days of September these rioters paraded the streets, crying, "Down with the English vaccinators," as well as "Bravo Riel," for they mingled race-feeling with their superstition. They did some damage to the health office, but were quieted by a display of troops. The disease has a strong hold upon the French quarter of the city, where the people do all in their power to obstruct the city physicians. But the death-rate is declining, and the worst of the plague is undoubtedly over.

This visitation has deprived Montreal of the profits of the usual summer travel, and will prevent the grand winter carnival which for the last few years has attracted so many visitors to the northern city. Isolated cases have occurred in other parts of Canada, but there is no fear of an epidemic.

The Cholera in Europe.

THE Thanksgiving proclamation of the President reminded us that while other nations had been ravaged by pestilence we had enjoyed the blessings of health.

For two years the Asiatic cholera has been slowly traveling westward from port to port along the Mediterranean, and we may well be thankful that no ship of Europe has brought the deadly germs to our sea-board. France, Sicily, and Spain are the countries which have suffered most this year. In France the disease has not been allowed to reach the interior, but has been restricted to the cities of Marseilles and Toulon. With autumn the news came that these cities were once more free from the plague.

The seeds of the disease lie widely scattered throughout Italy, but the sufferings of last year have been repeated only in Sicily. Sixty thousand of the inhabitants of Palermo have fled from that stricken city, leaving four thousand fellow-citizens in the grasp of the cholera. But the worst has been reserved for Spain. The English commission reports that no such pestilence has blighted Europe since the Middle Ages. Madrid escaped, but among the poor people who live in the old provincial cities or in the filthy alleys of the sea-port towns, there have been a quarter of a million cases of the dreadful pest, with one hundred thousand deaths. Ignorance and superstition have baffled the efforts of the health officials to stay the progress of the plague. The priest-ridden peasants have vainly trusted to their charms and amulets, and have in many villages killed the physicians who sought to help them.

The disease has subsided every-where at the approach of winter. But the story of the summer abroad makes us doubly thankful that the terrible visitation has spared us for another year.

The President's Message.

IT is customary for the President to send a communication to Congress in the early days of the session reviewing the administration and recommending to the Senate and House those topics which, in his judgment, demand their attention. The first annual message of President Cleveland was presented to Congress December 8. The document contains over 20,000 words, and, notwithstanding its length, deserves a careful examination.

The foreign relations of the United States have been uniformly friendly. Points of dispute have arisen, but have been discussed and decided in every case with such good sense that our peace has not been ruffled. Our government is bound by treaty to protect the railway transit at Panama, and it has been necessary for us to dispatch a naval force to the Isthmus to maintain order, the region being then in the hands of the Colombian rebels. This duty was satisfactorily performed.

The department reports are next summarized. The Treasury statement for the year ending June 1, 1885, places the total receipts of the government at $322,000,000, and the expenditures at $260,000,000, leaving a surplus of $62,000,000. On the first day of November, 1885, the public debt amounted to $1,514,475,860 47. The President urges the necessity of prompt action restricting the coinage of the "eighty-cent"

silver dollar. He also recommends a reduction of tariff upon the necessaries of life.

The army, which now consists of 2,154 officers and 24,705 enlisted men, is next considered. Several regiments have been employed in keeping the Indians within their reservations and in expelling white land-grabbers and cattle-men from the Indian lands. Troops were also sent to the scene of the anti-Chinese riots to aid in the preservation of order. Weak as the army certainly is, its condition contrasts favorably with that of the navy, which does not contain a single first-class war vessel. The message calls for a reorganization of this department upon a plan which shall provide us with an effective and creditable fleet.

The postal service is prosperous, but its revenues are less than they were before the reduction of the rate of letter-postage in 1883.

The U. S. Courts are overburdened with a great number of cases, and legislation is demanded which shall relieve them of their pressure.

Much space is devoted to the Indian problem. The President favors a commission of six men who shall personally inspect the condition of the tribes and advise the government in all cases where there is need of aid or correction.

The sentences relating to the Mormons are direct and strong. They demand the strict enforcement of the present laws against polygamy, and they would strike a blow at the Mormon re-enforcements by excluding Mormon immigrants from the United States.

The President says a few words in favor of civil-service reform, and after an appeal to Congress to provide for the presidential succession in cases like that which followed the death of the late Vice-President, the message closes as follows:

In conclusion, I commend to the wise care and thoughtful attention of Congress the needs, the welfare, and the aspirations of an intelligent and generous nation. To subordinate these to the narrow advantages of partisanship, or the accomplishment of selfish aims, is to violate the people's trust and betray the people's interests. But an individual sense of responsibility on the part of each of us, and a stern determination to perform our duty well, must give us place among those who have added in their day and generation to the glory and prosperity of our beloved land. GROVER CLEVELAND.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 8, 1885.

Pronunciation.

Al-păc'a.	Că'cĕr-ĕs.	Li'ma	Par'nell.
Am'a-zon.	Că-lā'brĭ-a.	(Lee'ma).	Pĭ-zar'ro.
An'dēs.	Cham-plain'	Mar-seilles'	Prē'mĭ-er.
Bra-zil'.	(Shăm-plān').	(Mar-sailz').	Roche
Bo-li'vi-a	E-cuă-dōr'.	Ma-drid'.	(Rōke).
(Bō-lē'vē-a).	In'ca.	Med-ĭ-ter-rā'ne-an.	Ta-ra-pa-ca'.
Cal'la-o	Ig-lēs'ĭ-ăs.	Mŏnt-rē-al'	Ti-ti-ca'ca
(Cal'lya-ō).	Sou-dan'	(Mŏnt-rē-awl').	(Tē-tē-caa'caa).
Chi'li	(Soo-dahn').	Pa-lĕr'mō.	Tou-lon'
(Chē'lē).		Pē-rū'.	(Too-lōng').

About Peru.

(For Statistics, see OUR YOUTH, No. 1, p. 13.)

PERU is a wonder-land. Although it lies beneath the burning sun of the tropics, its soil produces the fruits of every land; and its climate is more temperate than that of our Northern States. The range of the Andes here broadens into lofty plains, upon which most of the cities are situated, far above some of the famous peaks of the Swiss Alps. On the Bolivian frontier is Lake Titicaca, as large as Lake Champlain, and 12,000 feet above the sea-level. East and west of the mountains the regions differ vastly. The narrow coast-belt is a hot, rainless desert, with no safe harbors in its whole extent of 1,600 miles. Eastward the Andes descend to dark forest plains full of unknown birds and beasts and men, and stretching away to Brazil and the Amazon.

Peru was once famous for its silver and gold, but since the discovery of the immense deposits of guano and other fertilizers, the sources of her ancient wealth have been neglected. The government assumed control of the guano trade, and for some years not only paid all the expenses of administration from the profits of these works, but built an extensive railway system, and equipped a powerful navy without taxing the people. In addition to the fertilizers, large quantities of sugar and alpaca wool are exported.

The history of the country is as strange as its natural features. The Spanish discoverers in 1525 found the country occupied by a gentle race, who constructed great highways and bridges, worshiped in grand temples, dwelt in populous cities, and lived in happiness under the rule of their Incas. Pizarro, with a few hundred desperate followers, brought this nation under the dominion of Spain, and for two centuries the hoarded silver and gold of the Incas freighted those Spanish treasure ships which were so often the prey of Captain Kidd and his fellow mariners.

Early in the present century the South American provinces revolted. Peru regained her liberty in 1821. Since that time her progress has been hindered by the character of the population, a half-breed race, sunk in ignorance and blindly devoted to the Romish Church.

The following books are recommended to those who desire to pursue the subject farther:

"The Conquest of Peru," by W. H. Prescott. This is the best history of Pizarro's marvelous campaign, and the whole book is as interesting as a fairy tale.

"Peru and the Land of the Incas," by E. G. Squier, presents a satisfactory description of the country and people.

"The Boy Travelers in South America," by T. W. Knox, devotes several chapters to a pleasant account of Peruvian life. This book has many illustrations.

BEST BOOKS.

A Good Catch; or, Mrs. Emerson's Whaling Cruise. By Mrs. Helen E. Brown. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication.

This is a simply told, pleasant little story, based, the Introduction says, upon actual experience. The wife of a whaling captain, tired of long separations, accompanies her husband on a four years' cruise. Their little daughter is also one of the party. The book gives considerable information, and shows the influence of a good woman on the lives and characters of the crew. We can recommend the book, especially to our younger readers.

We Two Alone in Europe. By Mary L. Ninde. Chicago: Jansen, M'Clurg, & Co.

An account of a year spent by two young American ladies in foreign travel, written by one of them, and dedicated to the other. This is a readable book, and while it presents rather familiar scenes and subjects, it would serve as an agreeable introduction to a course of reading in European, Oriental, and Egyptian life, art, and architecture.

Mrs. Herndon's Income. By Mrs. Helen Campbell. Boston: Roberts Bros. $1 50.

Mrs. Campbell pleads the cause of the poor and downtrodden, and suggests methods for improving the condition of this unfortunate class. The book is thoughtfully and earnestly written, and although the thread of the story is sometimes in danger of breaking, the main purpose of the work is kept steadily in sight.

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Jest and Youthful Jollity.

"Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful jollity."—*Milton.*

—Christmas comes but once a year,
But when it comes it brings good cheer.
Then come turkey, cake, and candy—
It's well to have the doctor handy.

—It is said that out in Montana Christmas trees are trimmed with toy horse-thieves, pistols, and bowie knives. Here is an inducement for the small boy to "go west."

—A two-headed lady from Lime,
Most certainly merits a rhyme.
Boys stood in a row,
'Neath white mistletoe,
And she kissed them all, two at a time.

—A boy in Ohio has an idea which he wants patented. It consists in cutting off the foot of a stocking and suspending the remainder over a barrel on Christmas Eve. He thinks that Santa Claus in trying to fill the stocking will leave a barrel-full of good things.

—Watch her come with laughing eyes!
See her blush of quick surprise!
No, of course she didn't know
Where they'd hung the mistletoe!

—There's a dark-skinned little girl,
Whose brain is in a whirl,
With the thought that old St. Nick will find her not,
Since she hasn't any hose
To suspend before his nose,
For our maiden is a little Hottentot.

Christmas Among the Poor.

In a one-story flat
On the edge of New York,
Lives a truckman named Pat,
From the county of Cork.

For to please his son Tim,
He'd some fine Christmas boughs,
And had hung from a limb
Two soft ginger-bread cows.

In the dead of the night
There appeared Billy-goat;
One glance at the sight,
And it went down his throat.

With the dawn Pat arose
To observe the last leaf
Disappear 'neath the nose
Of the "can-nibble" thief.

Patrick dealt him a kick,
While he shouted "Whorroo!
Since ye've aten my tree
Take my missile-toe too."

A Christmas Surprise.

Their mother was decking a Christmas tree:
She covered the branches with cotton for snow,
And the sparkling ice which hung from the boughs
Was nothing but twisted glass, you know.

The children saw it, and whispered low:
"Poor mamma," said Jack, "she means all right,
And wishes to please us, but she can't go
To get real snow and the ice so bright."

"But we will surprise her," Miss Molly said,
"We'll fix her a tree as it should be done;
You get the hatchet and I'll get the sled,
There's time before tea if we only run."

They chopped out a shrub from a neighboring hedge,
Well-laden with snow and with glittering ice,
And tugged it home on their little sledge,
Keeping as quiet as well-bred mice.

They stowed it away by the parlor door,
This "real" surprise for their mother dear,
And chuckled merrily o'er and o'er,
Then slept till the sun rose bright and clear.

Alas! by morning their hopes had fled,
For what they had left as an arctic tree
Had melted while they were safely in bed,
And deluged the room like a tropical sea.

The surprise, to be sure, had worked like a charm;
And as the conspirators stood by the fire,
Said Molly to Jack, "Well, 'twasn't much harm,
But cotton, I s'pose, *is* a little bit drier."

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